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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 May 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 mai 2017

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RENTAL FAIRNESS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN LOCATION IMMOBILIÈRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 1, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 3, 2017, I am now required to put the question.

Madame Lalonde has moved second reading of Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This is a deferred vote. It will be after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

STRONGER, HEALTHIER ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2017

LOI DE 2017 POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT ET EN MEILLEURE SANTÉ (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 3, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / Projet de loi 127, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter, à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. And just when you thought your day couldn't get worse, you now have to listen to me for an hour on finance.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the members for their rousing applause.

Anyway, I've had the opportunity—I would say “honour,” but I would say more “opportunity”—to listen to the debate from both sides, from the government side and the opposition side, both hours, the member from Etobicoke Centre on behalf of the government and the member from Nipissing on behalf of the opposition. Now it's time for the NDP to add their remarks to the fray.

What I did learn from the hour and the opposing hour is that each side is accusing the other side of doing things that change the actual balance of the budget. So the government is adding the sale of Hydro One and the Tories are quite angry at that. The government replies, “Well, you did that with the 407.” What we're saying is, a pox on both their houses.

Everyone knows that the sale of the 407 was a mistake—it was a mistake. The Mike Harris government did it. It's widely acknowledged by the vast majority of people that it was a mistake. The Conservative Party will tell you they didn't sell it, that they leased it for 99 years. That is somehow supposed to make it better. We realize that that's a mistake.

But in the same vein, the vast majority of Ontarians believe that the sale of Hydro One is also a mistake and that it will go down in history right up there with the 407 as a mistake that everyone knew of and some people were just unwilling to admit. And where it fits into the budget motion, into the budget bill more specifically, is that the proceeds of the sale are being used to balance the budget. Anyone who has ever run a business—using sales of assets, one-time assets, to balance operating budgets is just not good accounting; long term, it's just not good accounting.

Actually, the government admits that, because several times Minister Sousa has said that any new debt will only be used to invest in infrastructure. Well, if you think that through, if any new debt will only be used to invest in infrastructure, then whenever you sell infrastructure, those proceeds shouldn't be added to your operating capital. You can't have it both ways. That's a huge issue.

What is especially egregious about the sale of Hydro One is that Hydro One is an asset that actually brings in income. It's not a one-time sale of a lot or a building which, while also wrong, isn't—except for the rent—a huge income generator. But Hydro One is an income generator, and the income that is generated could be used to actually fund schools or provide programs to make hydro more affordable or provide funds to help green infrastructure. Those are all options that could be used.

But once you sell, once you continue the sale of Hydro One, the power to do that is gone.

If you look in the budget already, operating income from Hydro One, because we've—not we—because the government has decided to sell now up to 30%, the income from Hydro One is already impacting the budget. The income is going down. So if this government continues on its path, and if they're not stopped and the majority of Hydro One is sold, the one-time income from the sale will be lost forever and the recurring income every year, the dividends, from Hydro One will also be gone. That's why we should stop it. That's why one of the things that the NDP—our first act as government would be to stop the sale of Hydro One. Because we all know that, long term, the privatization of our hydro system is the root cause of why our hydro rates have skyrocketed. It started under the Conservative government. It continues under the Liberal government. Each time that you chip away and put more profit lines into an essential service, the price goes up and up and up.

As a result, the government has had to take measures. Despite being told for years and years that people in the province were no longer being able to keep up with their hydro bills, despite being told year after year by the opposition parties, by, much more importantly, members of the public, the government ignored this issue. I've been here five years and I remember that when we brought the issue of hydro rates up, the Minister of Energy at that time said, "What are you worried about? It's the price of a cup of coffee." Do you remember the cup of coffee? Do you remember when it wasn't a crisis? It wasn't even a year ago that it wasn't a crisis, despite the fact that people were losing their businesses, losing their homes, having to choose between heat and eat. Now, in the budget, there are measures that will alleviate that problem for the very short term, because there are no structural changes being made; there's a band-aid being put on.

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The bill is still going to come due. It's actually going to be much bigger when it finally comes due. Instead of making structural changes as the NDP has proposed, what's happening here is that the government has decided to go for a minimum payment on their credit card. That's what they're doing. They're saying to the people of Ontario, "Okay, here are the actual bills, but we realize you can't pay the actual bills, so we're going to make them look much smaller and we're going to just extend the payment. So you'll just have to make the minimum payment. You don't have to worry about that, because it will be the next generation that has to worry about that."

Doesn't that go counter to almost everything that, deep down, we as parents and as grandparents believe? Don't we want to make it better for the next generation as opposed to saddling the next generation with the mistakes that the current generation has made? Doesn't that go counter to everything that most of us believe?

What's especially troubling with this is that it doesn't have to be this way. The government, both the Tories and

the Liberals, has made big mistakes. But there are ways to solve these problems or at least look toward solving them, making strides to solve them, without saddling my grandkids with those debts. This government has refused to go down this path. And for the life of me, I can't understand why. Why, when there are paths forward—they're not simple, they're not easy, but they're there—this government refuses to do that?

What this government has done is, on part of the hydro bill, they're extending the debt; on the other part, the part in this current budget, they're dropping some of the delivery charges, but they're just adding that into government expenditures. So it's going from delivery charge directly to the ratepayer, directly to the hydro bill, to now part of the delivery charge is going directly to the tax bill. We all know what happens when that gets added to the tax bill: Eventually those rebates are going to stop. You just know it. They haven't changed anything structurally, so it's kind of like a ticking hydro bomb. Probably a better analogy would be the hydro hot potato. No one wants to grab the potato, but eventually we all know who is going to have to grab the hot potato. It's going to be the people of Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And it's going to burn.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's going to burn, and it's getting hotter and hotter and hotter.

Instead of actually looking at the problem—they're looking at the problem, but the Wynne government is looking at it as a political problem, a political problem in their agenda. So as long as they can cool the fire, as long as they can cool the hydro hot potato until the next election, that's their main concern. Our main concern is that we look at this problem so that the people of Ontario don't get burned, and that's not what's happening here. That's why one of the first things that this budget does is completely, completely off the mark: continuing the sale of Hydro One. It's completely, completely off the mark.

I'm going to say this once more: For those who say that stopping the sale of Hydro One won't make any difference to the price, once again, that defies common sense, because every time that we have put more privatization into the system, the price rises.

Furthermore, for the people of rural Ontario, something else we have learned is that when essential services are privatized, the service level drops, because a private corporation—and we're not opposed to private corporations. They play a vital role in our society. But they have a different goal than public corporations. A private corporation is there to maximize profit. That's their role: provide a service and maximize profit.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Look what happened to the Internet.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's where I'm going.

If you're looking at providing an essential service, a service, like hydro, that has to have wide infrastructure across the province, there are certain places that are going to be more profitable than others. Densely populated is going to be more profitable than others. A private company is going to look more at their profit centres and

try to get away from their non-profit centres. That's what private companies should do. They have shareholders. That's what they should do.

We've got an example. We used to have a public Internet provider in northeastern Ontario. The reason they were there, the reason that the government created them—they were called Ontera; they were operated through the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. The reason they were there was because there weren't enough customers in this part of northern Ontario to justify—a private operator wouldn't go in there because there was not enough money for a private operator. But, on the flip side, the companies there and the customers there, the individuals there, needed the service, and overall it was benefiting the economy. It was actually providing income to the province as a whole.

The government decided to sell it, so they sold it—some would say they gave it away—to Bell Aliant.

We were told that it was going to be the same level of service. Ontera is still there. It's controlled by Bell Aliant. But if you want to get an Internet connection now, in the service area provided by Ontera, you're not able to.

Hon. David Zimmer: What?

Mr. John Vanthof: They're not accepting new customers.

Hon. David Zimmer: Oh, no.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. They're not accepting new customers, although they are supposed to provide the same service.

Again, that's a difference between private and public. If we allow the sale of Hydro One to continue, eventually, based on the facts we've seen from Ontera, that's what is going to happen with Hydro One services as well. That is one of the main reasons why people throughout Ontario, particularly rural Ontario—chambers of commerce and businesses have all told the government that we can't keep repeating the mistakes of selling off our hydro infrastructure piece by piece because they need the money, because it's false economy.

That's why we would maintain Hydro One, and that's why we would implement actual policies that would change the way delivery charges are charged and change other things to make a permanent reduction in hydro rates, as opposed to this short-term political band-aid.

It is kind of interesting. This budget is called Stronger, Healthier Ontario. If you go through the budget numbers, there are some positive numbers in the budget. I think one of the things that people dislike about politics in general is that we always pick out the worst things and we never say there are some good things in the budget or in the province. Ontario is a great place, and there are some positive things in the budget. But even a broken clock is right twice a day.

The employment numbers in the budget are good. The problem, when you dig a bit deeper, is, the economy across the province isn't equal. Some parts of the province are doing well, and other parts not so much. This budget, in my opinion and I think in our opinion,

seems to ignore that. Of course, the government is going to focus on the good. That's their job. We're going to focus on what we think should be done better. That's our job. But the government, in their focus, seems to be losing sight of whole areas of the province.

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They also seem to be losing sight of the things they are actually promoting. Take the budget, with the Stronger, Healthier Ontario—and the health care budget is half of our total budget. It's a big thing. What is more important to the people of Ontario than health care? This budget talks about spending extra billions and billions—fine. A lot of it is loaded into the future, beyond the mandate of the government, particularly where it goes to hospital construction.

What struck me in the budget this time was, there are a lot of pictures of new schools and new hospitals. Some of them aren't even pictures; they're drawings of new schools and new hospitals that might be built in the future or that are scheduled to be built in the future. Well, that's not actually what the budget should be about. That's one thing I've learned in the five years that I've been here.

When I used to do budgets on the farm—truth be told, when my wife did the budgets on the farm. She might be watching. People get in trouble when they embellish their role in the operation.

So when my wife did the budgets on the farm, we wouldn't get very far with the bank manager if we talked about things we were going to do 10 years from then without actually laying out how we were going to fix things in the short term.

That's what I find: The budget process is always confusing for people because they talk about 10 years ahead. It used to be \$140 billion that they were going to spend on infrastructure; now it has gone to \$190 billion, but it has also been put out another, what, five or six years?

My colleague the member from Timmins—James Bay refuses to sit beside me when I speak because—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: That is one of the confusing things about the budget: that there are numbers that are big, and the government talks about the numbers, but they don't actually lay out the timelines. I'm not saying that's meant to confuse people, but big numbers without the years is a problem.

Getting back to what people are really concerned about: health care. One of the issues that we disagree with the government on—the government has said in the budget that they're going to put a booster shot into the hospital system. The term "booster shot" sounds like extra action. But we would question whether 3%—actually, it's a guarantee of 2% to the actual operating budgets, and the extra per cent could be for extraordinary conditions; I really can't tell you. But the actual guarantee to the hospital budget is 2%, and 2% is basically inflation. That is not a booster shot; that's maintenance at best.

There are big problems, for example, in our hospitals. I would like to read a couple that I've had the opportunity to be present for. I'm on the finance committee, and while we were on the pre-budget consultations, we were in London. Mr. Bryan Smith and Mrs. Alma Martin came, and Mr. Smith told Mrs. Martin's story and Mrs. Martin answered questions. I went up to them after, specifically, to ask him if I could read their story in the Legislature because I was deeply moved.

Mrs. Martin's husband's name was Bill. This is directly from their deposition, from Mr. Smith: "Alma is here today with me and has asked that her story and the story of Bill, her late husband, be told. Until a few months ago, I only knew them slightly as members of our community working to stop a dump that was affecting our environmental and human health."

"At an event in the fall, Bill, an active Kiwanian, was seated at a table collecting signatures from the public for an environmental question because, he told me, he was awaiting knee surgery and couldn't lift or carry. He had been waiting for two years.

"When surgery was finally to happen, Bill and Alma travelled to London's University Hospital, because Woodstock doesn't have the cardiology backup needed. Knee surgery these days is routine. Bill's was anything but routine.

"Bill needed anti-coagulants as regular medication, but was instructed to stop taking them three days according to a surgeon, but five days according to an"—this is a tough word for me—"anaesthetist. That made for a risk of blood clots. The risk, Bill and Alma were told, was acceptable. Nothing that happened thereafter was acceptable.

"Bill was in a room with a dementia patient, where recovery was difficult because of the other man's sufferings. When he was discharged by a fourth-year medical student, he was sick. Alma, though, was hopeful that being home would help him. She could spend more time with him, rather than driving back and forth.

"He got worse at home and was taken by ambulance to Ingersoll's Alexandra Hospital. It appeared that he had pneumonia. His kidney was malfunctioning. Creatinine levels were too high. He didn't get better.

"The infection from University Hospital was resistant to antibiotics. He was sent again to London. There, he found himself again in a ward where rest was difficult. Alma begged—that's her expression—that Bill be moved to a private room sitting empty in the same hall. She was told that the hospital was not allowed to use that room unless he required isolation for a drug-resistant infection. He had one, contracted in the hospital, but it was undiagnosed.

"After intervention, he was moved from the ward to a semi-private room but, again, less than acceptable. He was placed in with another dementia patient who was out of his clothes, who was yelling at the top of his lungs, who struck the nurse and whom it took three security people to secure. The bed beside Bill was then occupied by a man with a staph infection so serious that doctors

and nurses wore gowns, masks and gloves. Bill did not have any protection from these germs other than the curtain between the beds.

"He didn't get better. He did get shuttled back to Ingersoll in a transport without medical support, whose staff said that if anything went wrong en route, they would call an ambulance. The infection was not only in his lungs, it was now on his skin. He didn't get better.

"There is more to this troubling story, and I'll leave it to you to imagine or to ask Alma. Alma is still in grief. I attended Bill's funeral on December 4. Alma had told me that she didn't think she would get through the telling of this story that I've shared with her permission, but that, if you have any questions, she will try to answer.

"Because I've talked most of this time that you've kindly allotted to us, I would ask you again to be so kind as to talk to Alma first."

To which the member from Etobicoke Centre asked Mrs. Martin, "What advice would you give this committee as far as what we can do to improve our health care system?"—a very good question.

Mrs. Martin replied, "It would have been great if Bill could have had his surgery two years earlier. He waited a long time for that. He was hopeful, because he was going to be curling and golfing and doing all the things he loved to do again.

"I don't understand why we pay a CEO \$650,000 when that would pay 100 nurses' salaries—why one man deserves that kind of income, when they're so short of staff on the floors.

0930

"My husband was treated two thirds by university- and college-level students, which was wonderful experience for them, but I don't understand why we don't have more fully qualified RNs on the floor, more doctors on the floor.

"I spent long days at the hospital with Bill, because he needed things and there just weren't enough hands to provide what he needed. Even the announcement now that family members can be at their loved ones' side 24/7 is just an excuse to downgrade our health system further, because it's the families who will pick up the tab for getting what everyone needs. That's what I did. When it came to basics, like water and cleanliness and helping him to wash, it was me who was doing those things, not trained nursing staff.

"We just need more qualified and trained nurses and doctors to offer the care that our family members need."

Bill and Alma aren't isolated cases. We heard yesterday of Olive, who went to a hospital in Sudbury and spent—I believe I have it here. Olive is 84, and she lives in Sudbury. She was admitted to the hospital with sepsis. When she was being treated, she spent her first two nights on a stretcher in a busy ER and the next 20 days in a TV room with no washroom and no privacy, including—it gets better—one night in the shower room, which was quieter than the TV room.

This is happening across the province. This is happening because the government has frozen hospital

budgets for years and has bled the system to the bone. Now, to say that they're going to guarantee an inflationary increase and then an extra 1% to whichever they choose—to claim that that is a booster shot and that is “busy building a stronger, healthier Ontario,” is beyond belief. The government can talk about that all they want, but when people go into hospitals, they see what the issues are.

Also in the budget, it talks about long-term-care homes. In some areas of the province, there's a long wait for long-term-care homes. The budget says they're going to continue to try and redevelop long-term-care homes, which is a great thing. We are all trying to do that. We're all trying to work together, because there are a lot of older long-term-care homes that need to be redeveloped. I'm sure every member in this Legislature has some issues with long-term-care homes, including me. I've got several in my area. I've met with the minister to discuss this. We're all working to fix this.

But redeveloping long-term-care homes doesn't create more beds. It just makes the quality of life of the people in the older homes better, for the residents and for the staff, but it doesn't alleviate the problem that there are simply not enough beds.

Home care is the same. The government has had a focus, for as long as I've been here, on trying to get people out of hospitals, and, in some of the examples that I've read, for good reason. But there isn't the support when they get out of the hospital.

While the government talks about their balanced budget, and while the Conservatives talk about how it's not balanced, what we need to talk about in this province is how to make sure that people get the health care they deserve and that their parents get the health care they deserve.

While we're on the subject of health care, a big bone of contention for the last few days has been pharmacare. We, the NDP, have proposed a universal pharmacare program for everyone in the province. The government counters with another drug plan. They call it—what do they call it?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They call it OHIP+.

Mr. John Vanthof: OHIP+. Pharmacare-lite.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Is it safe?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, it's safe. I'm getting tired.

You know what? On the issue of providing pharmacare to people 24 and under, it's great. But what about the people who are 25 and up?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The ones who use the medication.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member from Timmins-James Bay and I live in the same building.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not together.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, not together.

I may get too personal, but we usually meet at the concierge's desk in the morning to walk to work. I promised Alex I would mention him this morning. We were talking to Alex the concierge and we were talking about pharmacare. I can't even tell you the first word he used because that would be unparliamentary, but the gist of his

argument was, “Well, what about me? And what about my kids when they're 28?” That's the question.

I had this conversation with my daughter. One of the arguments that the government uses for 24 is that it's just when people are starting out on their own. My daughter is just finishing university. She's too old for my benefit plan. This is the first time I've ever had a benefit plan. I was a self-employed farmer my whole life. I didn't know what drug plans and benefits were. I have four kids; I appreciate a drug plan for young people; it's a good idea. But just from my own experience, I need a lot more medication now than I did when I was 22. But my daughter—we had a discussion, and her first thought was, “Dad, I'm 26; I don't qualify for anything and I'm just getting started. This is when I really need it, and it's not there.”

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I am being heckled by a minister, who I respect. He's a medical doctor and the Minister of Health. Actually, I am honoured that I'm being heckled by the Minister of Health. I never thought in my career that I would ever be heckled by the Ontario Minister of Health.

I guess the crux of the matter is: Is it more for fewer or general for everyone? I think I would lose the debate with the Minister of Health on—if we go medication by medication, I'm sure we would. But overall, providing a high level for everyone makes more sense than providing—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Obviously, the government is fairly touchy about this because I am not being—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Partisan.

Mr. John Vanthof: I am not being partisan, and I'm being heckled by the Minister of Health, who I deeply respect.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And the President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. John Vanthof: And the President of the Treasury Board.

If I may, Speaker, we're going to get back to the financial part. In the budget, pharmacare—OHIP-lite, what the government calls their program—was mentioned.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: You call it OHIP+; I'm going to call it OHIP-lite.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hear, hear.

0940

Mr. John Vanthof: It's mentioned in the budget. I can find the page; it's page 25. What we found quite interesting is that if this program is—the government has been working on this for a long time, and to his credit, I know the minister has been advocating for pharmacare for a long time. But if this program is so well thought through and so well researched and the government has been working on it for such a long time, where are the allocations in the financial part of the budget? Perhaps I just don't understand how budgets are put together.

When I ran my farm, if I was going to change a program in the upcoming year and I had to go to the bank and explain how I was going to do it and it was going to be the greatest thing since sliced bread, I had to show where the money was going to come from.

If the minister could kindly point out the page where it shows in the budget where that money is coming from, I would be happy to have that discussion with him. But I don't see it. Perhaps I just don't understand how big provincial budgets are put together, but I don't think they're a whole lot different when you get down to the nitty-gritty. If I can't pass it through the bank, then I don't know where that's going to come from. I think then we could have a really good discussion. But that's part of the problem. I recall, on budget day, when the Minister of Finance was asked basically the same question and his response was, "Well, because we didn't want to make"—I'm paraphrasing here, and if the way I'm paraphrasing is wrong, I will gladly retract in future. They didn't want to make the book any longer.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Since when does a couple of pages make a difference in this document?

Mr. John Vanthof: Anyway, that's—

Hon. Eric Hoskins: That was a pretty generous paraphrase.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would be happy to look at the tapes of the budget serum. It was something like that.

Again, I think we'd have a much better debate on the government's promise of pharmacare—promise of OHIP+, or OHIP-lite—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: A new drug program.

Mr. John Vanthof: "A new drug program." That's right; those are the words I'm supposed to use: a new drug program. I think we'd have a much better discussion.

I think my other role here—and I would be remiss if I didn't—is that I'm also the critic for agriculture and rural affairs. And I'm from northern Ontario. That way, I also get the Minister of Health off my back.

On page 11 of the budget it mentions the strong sectors in Ontario's economy. If you go down that list—and I'm looking at the list now—the top one on the list is—and there could be other sectors that have more jobs. On the list that the government put out, the most workers, contributing over 6% of Ontario's GDP, were in agriculture, food and beverage processing. That doesn't surprise me. When I first got elected, it was in 2011 and we'd gone through the financial crisis. A lot of sectors were in trouble. And it wasn't that agriculture suddenly appeared; agriculture and food processing have always been there, and they've always been growing at a steady rate. Farmers and the people who work in that sector aren't flashy people; they just like to get their job done and keep doing it.

All of a sudden, the government realized that, "Whoa, this is a big part of the economy, and this part of the economy is growing." That's when the Premier challenged agriculture to create 120,000 jobs, which I thought was—the word isn't "laughable"; I'm looking for

the word. The sector—farmers and the people who process, both for food and for other uses, are always looking to grow and are always looking to increase their business and build. The fact that they continue to grow isn't because the Premier challenged them to create more jobs; it's because that's who they are. That's who small business people are.

But some of the things that rural Ontario needs aren't really focused on in this budget. If rural Ontario—and not all of these 800,000 jobs are in rural Ontario. I fully appreciate that, because a lot of the processing is done in cities, which makes sense. I certainly do not subscribe to the fact that we have to look at Ontario as two. I'm a proud Ontarian. I'm from northern Ontario, and I'm proud of Ontario. I'm proud of Toronto. I'm really proud of Toronto, and I hope people are proud of northern Ontario. But we have to also appreciate the differences, and we have to also work towards building the whole province. That's something that I think this government has forgotten.

The way I look at the province of Ontario is, if you think of a big wheel—think of a bicycle wheel. The hub, where the shifters and the bearings are, is the GTA. I've got no problem with that. That's where everything spins really fast. Everybody, once in a while, wants to go down here and spin really fast. But what makes that wheel spin is the spokes and the rim and the tire. The spokes are the infrastructure for rural Ontario and the rim and the tire are the province as a whole.

There are a lot of things in rural Ontario that we are losing, which, in the end, is going to hurt the whole province. We've heard a lot about rural schools, and to the government's—I don't want to be over-critical of the government. They have built schools where schools need to be built—in some communities.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And every government since—

Mr. John Vanthof: And every government before and every government since will continue to build schools. But you have to—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Governments build schools. That's the government's job.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. It is almost 9:50. It's never too early to warn people—

Interjection: Or too late.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): —or too late. That's right. So I want to encourage the members to talk through the Chair, not to each other.

I return to the debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I will try to ignore the government's heckles about schools. I will, for a second, just talk about—there was a demonstration outside about the closing of rural schools. The opposition leader made a statement that this government had closed even more schools than the previous government.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Which was his own.

Mr. John Vanthof: Which was his own government.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was kind of funny, actually.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes—and that line changed after that.

To us, the issue isn't how many schools; the issue is how you are looking at each community. Right now, the government is focusing on agriculture in northern Ontario. They have discovered agriculture in northern Ontario. It's always been there, but they have discovered it. But if you want young families to move to northern Ontario—I've lived there my whole life; it's a beautiful place—and the next school is an hour and a half away, they're not going to do it. They're not going to do it, and that's something that you have to realize.

0950

Another thing you have to realize is, if you want people to stay in the rural parts of the province, they have to have some equivalent services. I talked about it at the start of my rather rambling speech. Internet is a good example. Cellphone is a good example.

The Ministry of Agriculture went through estimates this spring. Was it last fall? Anyway, I'd never been to the estimates process before. The Minister of Agriculture, who I respect, said in his remarks that there is now an app on your phone to help a farmer deliver a calf. To non-farmers, this doesn't really mean much, but giving birth, in an animal, is an important part of life, as it is with humans, and you need to have skills to do that. The minister said agriculture is so dependent on technology that they have an app for that now.

My comment back to the minister is—

Hon. Liz Sandals: You need a veterinarian.

Mr. John Vanthof: They might need veterinarians, but most farmers know how to deliver a calf. If someone has to have an app, that's great. But in huge swaths of this province where these calves are being delivered, or where they're going to be delivered, there is no Internet service or no cell service. So what good is the app unless it's an Etch A Sketch? That is the issue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I got one of those in the late 1950s.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, keep it, because we might need it.

That's the issue. What they are saying, in many cases, doesn't translate to what is actually happening, or not happening, on the ground.

If you want people to stay in the country, they're going to need some kind of transportation or transit in the country as well. There are no connections. We used to have a train; it was cut. We were promised enhanced bus service; it's not enhanced. I don't know what "enhanced" is, but our bus service isn't enhanced.

Again, it's not the local people; it's not the ONTC. The government just doesn't appreciate that—they do government by the numbers, government by population, and that's fine, to a point. But the rural parts of this province contribute immensely—far greater per person, in many cases, than the urban ones.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm being heckled.

Some people out in the country—a farm with one farm family adds \$1 million or \$2 million to the GDP. I think they also should be able to access some kind of transportation, some kind of Internet service, and they should be able to access natural gas.

I'm not trying to separate—as I said, I'm proud of our urban areas. My wife is from Holland. When her relatives come here, we love to tour them across the whole province, because we're proud of it. But there are things that aren't happening in rural Ontario that, if they did, would increase the economic development of this whole province.

If you will recall, Speaker—and my colleague from Timmins—James Bay probably knows these figures much better—a lot of the Toronto Stock Exchange came from the mines in Cobalt. A lot of our effort in World War II came from the mines in Kirkland Lake. Now we seem to be walking away from that, and people are really feeling it.

That's why my colleague and I are dealing with the Northern Ontario Party, who want to separate, which I totally think is the wrong thing to do. But people are really feeling disenfranchised, and that's an issue.

The government can talk a good line about all the great things they're doing, and they are doing a few things, but if people aren't feeling it on the ground, there's a reason why polls don't think that things are going as great as what the budget says they're going.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, there's a reason. There's a lot of people who are feeling very disenfranchised. Are there some good things happening in this province? Yes, because it's a great province.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Despite our best efforts.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, despite some huge mistakes that have been made by both governing parties in the past. Hydro—we have always—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. James J. Bradley: What about the Manitoba contract?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That was a smart thing to do. It was a dumb thing for you to put in the first place, Jim. You're going to lecture us on electricity policy?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): It's not even 10, folks. I want to hear the debate. I'm sure those at home want to hear the debate too.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Him and I were here in 1990.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Timmins—James Bay knows better, knows not to cross-talk.

I'm going to return to the members to resume their debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker, for your intervention.

I guess governments within recent memory—we can blame some stuff on the Romans as well, but governments within recent memory. The one example is hydro,

and I think that our deepest hydro problems started with privatization. The reason Ontario became the manufacturing economic powerhouse was because of Sir Adam Beck and power to all at cost, and one of the reasons for our decline is that the price of power has just gone beyond the scope of what most people are willing to pay. This short-term fix that the government is proposing is simply going to delay the problem. That is one of the reasons that this budget is so problematic.

I'd like to close—an hour is a long time to speak. Did you know that, Speaker? I'd like to close, actually, on something else I learned: that the budget document—the 2017 Ontario budget, Stronger, Healthier Ontario—actually has very little to do with the budget bill. I was expecting somebody to point that out half an hour ago, but no one did. If you look at the actual budget bill, and I appreciate—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Although I do listen to the minister, I appreciate she doesn't like listening to me.

A lot of the budget bill has issues in it that, while they are important issues, have really nothing to do with the budget. I find that kind of interesting, for lack of a better word. If the budget bill would have had the actual regulations or how OHIP+ was going to work, it would have been good. We could have had a real discussion.

Another thing I was remiss to mention is the Ring of Fire. There's a big debate here on whether the Ring of Fire is in the budget or not.

It would have been good, if actually in the budget bill, which is much more—it's a bill. The bill is more like what we're used to seeing; the budget document is more of a promotional document. I don't have a problem with that, but that's what it is. But there's very little in the budget bill that actually reflects what people are talking about in the budget. For that reason and a few others, I am recommending that our party does not support the motion or the bill.

1000

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I wasn't planning to speak, and I want to apologize for the heckling earlier on, but I have to talk a little bit about pharmacare. The conspiracy theorists out there are loving it, this idea that somehow we learned last week about their plan for pharmacare and cooked up ours on the back of a napkin and snuck it into the budget at the last minute. I think, in fact, the opposite question needs to be asked: Did they get wind of our visionary and historic expansion of pharmacare in this province and cook theirs up over the course of a weekend?

I can say with absolute confidence that kids' pharmacare—and if you talk to other provinces and territories, they will confirm that I presented the concept to the federal, provincial and territorial meeting last fall when, despite that national effort continuing, we began to realize that perhaps there was an opportunity for Ontario to go it alone. So for months, Madam Speaker, I have

been working with the finance minister and with the Premier's office—the Premier, again, showing tremendous courage to advance this program that is so well thought out.

When you look at their plan—which is income tested, by the way, because they will income test the copayment that is required of any individual in this province who wants it. So it is income tested. It is not a universal program in that context. It's 125 medications. That's 4,275 fewer medications than what we're proposing. Theirs requires them getting elected some time into the future—perhaps, they think, as early as 2020. Ours begins January 1, 2018. Theirs won't cover cancer drugs; it won't cover drugs for rare diseases. We cover 20 antidepressants; theirs will cover two. We cover, I think, 15 oral hypoglycemics for insulin; they cover one. There are more differences—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Whitby-Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning. It's good to see you in the chair again.

One of the aspects that I hear in my constituency office in Whitby-Oshawa is that the Liberals have no plan in the Ontario budget to get the debt under control—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. Lorne Coe: —that they more than doubled the debt in just 14 years, and that Ontario is worse off as a result.

When it comes to hydro, schools, health care and housing, Whitby-Oshawa residents are telling me that they're not getting any value for the money at all.

Let's turn to debt for a moment. Ontario continues to be the largest subnational debtor in the world, at more than \$300 billion and climbing. This is more than double since the Liberals came to office. The province now pays, in debt interest, \$12 billion—more than they spend on post-secondary education, than they spend on important youth programs like autism, than they spend on community safety. Ontario is worse off as a result of the debt created by the government.

Let's turn for a moment, also, to child care in particular. The majority of the Liberals' promise for new child care spots won't take effect until 2022. Speaker, you've heard me speak about Grandview Children's Centre here frequently. There's not one word in 296 pages about the Grandview Children's Centre—not one word. Nine years we've been waiting. The property exists, \$8 million raised, and not one word in the Ontario budget about Grandview Children's Centre.

I could go on and talk about investments in students with special needs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I would like to congratulate my colleague, who did an hour with basically no notes, with heart and passion, about the budget.

He spent 22 minutes on Hydro One. The biggest crisis in Ontario is Hydro One.

The 407, I thought, was the biggest mistake that was made in Ontario. We lost \$9 billion by the sell-off and the lease of the 407.

The biggest mistake in the history of the province of Ontario is the sell-off of Hydro One. It has caused such hardship on our seniors, our single moms, our single dads, and all of our municipalities. So make no mistake about it, the fact that he spent so much time on Hydro One—and then you hear about the CEO, Mayo Schmidt, making \$5 million. He's goes in I think it was the Toronto Star and talks about how he feels our pain. How does anybody making \$5 million feel the pain of somebody trying to make up their hydro bill every month, where they've got to choose between medication—like our seniors—or paying their hydro bill, where you've got to choose between buying food or paying your hydro bill? And the CEO is saying he feels our pain? He doesn't feel our pain at all. He doesn't know what Ontarians are going through.

When 94%—and I'm saying this to the Liberals, so listen to this—of Ontarians are saying to you, "Don't sell Hydro One. We can't afford it in the province of Ontario. Don't put the debt onto my kids or grandkids"—I'm here to make life better for my kids and grandkids. That's why I'm here. That's why I wanted to be elected.

I want to say to the health minister—I want to thank him for putting in about Niagara Falls hospital, but I also want to say to him that we've got to get it done immediately. We've lost services now for four years at our hospital. They're not investing in the Niagara Falls hospital, and I understand why. But also, what we have to do is we've got to have a debate about whether it should be publicly funded or a P3 hospital. And we have to make sure that it's with local workers. My area needs jobs. Those local people have got to get back to work. Local businesses have got to supply that hospital. I'd appreciate having that conversation with the minister.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm privileged to have a chance to respond to the member opposite. I really like the member opposite from the NDP. He and I have a chance to work together on a regular basis, and I think he's a thoughtful, reasonable person.

Applause.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Yes. I enjoyed hearing his remarks, and I appreciate that he was thoughtful and balanced in his approach. He was critical of those things he didn't think were being done well, but also positive about some of the things that were being done well—not all the things he could have been, I thought. But I like him nevertheless, and I respect him.

The member spoke a lot about health care and the need to provide good care to people across Ontario. One of the reasons I'm excited about this budget—and I said this yesterday—is that I think there's a suite of solutions, of investments to support greater health care. The Minister of Health just spoke to the OHIP+ program, so I won't add to that. But when I think about the investments

that are being made in hospitals—and we continue to increase those investments. The investments in the operating funds for hospitals: The member opposite spoke about the need to support hospital operating funding. The Minister of Health and the Premier have ensured that that's happening. Providing support for caregivers out there is so important. There's a dementia strategy. I think there's a whole suite of solutions there in addition to the pharmacare plan that are really positive and will help enhance care in Ontario. Do we have more work to do? Sure. But I think these are really important and exciting steps.

I can't help—and I hope the member will forgive me—but respond to what was said by the PC member. It's really disappointing to me to hear them say, on the one hand, "Please spend more money in my riding. Please support this cause," and at the same time say, "Oh, but you need to be cutting the debt and cutting the interest payments." Where does the PC Party stand? What would you cut? To me, the fact that they continue to argue for paying down debt and bringing down interest further suggests that they would cut. The question is, what would they cut? Would they cut health care? Education? Infrastructure? What would they—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I return to the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane to wrap up.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the Minister of Health, the member from Whitby—Oshawa, my colleague from Niagara and the member from Etobicoke Centre for their comments. I would like to thank them all because they actually did listen to what I had to say. It wasn't just lines that someone else had written, and I appreciate that.

I appreciate the comments that we had from the minister after my speech. We will continue to agree to disagree, but continue to work together on the issues that are important to the people of this province.

I didn't, in my hour—I was remiss. I didn't mention, actually, one thing in my own riding that I was trying to lobby for. I'm very proud to represent the people of Timiskaming—Cochrane. I would be remiss if I didn't mention that, yesterday, we had family services here, and I met Natalie Parnell from Timmins. I went to their reception because I had never—and I don't pretend to know everything that's going on here—heard of family services. So I went to the reception, and I met Natalie in the hall. One of the reasons I had never heard of them is because in Timiskaming—Cochrane, they don't exist. We have the Pavilion centre in Haileybury; it's a shelter for women. We have that, but the other services, because we're a rural part of the province, don't really fit. Some of my riding is served by North Bay and Sturgeon Falls. Many of the services that people take for granted, which aren't even enough in urban centres, aren't even in parts of rural Ontario. It wasn't just me. They don't exist. Those are things we have to fix because our issues with stress are equal to anywhere else—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. *Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's almost 10:15, I will recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: On behalf of the member for Nepean–Carleton, I'd like to welcome guests of page captain Matthew Howell. His grandparents Marie and James Howell are in the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is indeed another day in paradise in the House when we have one of our former colleagues here with us, the former member from Beaches–East York—who is now a constituent of mine, in my riding of Essex, who lives on Boblo Island and who is one of my dearest fishing partners—the great Michael Prue.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'd like to welcome Michael Donolo, who is a summer intern in my office. Welcome, Michael.

Speaker, I'd also like to wish everyone a happy Star Wars Day. In fact, may the fourth be with you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You got groans on all sides of the House for that one.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Chantel Elloway, a journalist, a reporter and just an all-around great person. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to welcome my new legislative assistant, Jenan Nasser, to Queen's Park. Welcome to the House, and enjoy the day.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce Marek Goldyn, with the European Club of Canada.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It gives me great pleasure to welcome today to the gallery Paul Tye, from Tye Consulting—no stranger to this place, and a former colleague of mine with Peter Milliken.

I would also like to welcome, on behalf of my seatmate, Harinder Malhi, MPP for Brampton–Springdale, the guest of page captain Peter Schneider: his mother, Pearl Quan.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I, too, am pleased to rise here today and welcome two fantastic representatives from the European Club of Canada. I would like to warmly welcome Marek Goldyn and Chantel Elloway to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: As you know, it is Battle of the Atlantic Day at Queen's Park today.

I see a number of military veterans past and present. I'd like to welcome Brian Weaver, the president of the Ontario Command of the Royal Canadian Legion. Welcome back to Queen's Park, sir.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome Charlotte Zronik, who is joining my ministry as a summer intern. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Patrick Brown: It's my pleasure to introduce members in the gallery who are here today for the tribute

for Victory in Europe Day and the Battle of the Atlantic. They include:

—veterans of the Second World War: Minoru Yatabe, Jerry Rosenberg, Fraser McKee, Jim Macaluso, Helen Kerr and Kenneth May;

—Major General Fraser Holman, from the Canadian Forces College;

—Lieutenant Colonel David DeVries, commanding officer of 32 Service Battalion;

—Chief Warrant Officer Mark Shannon, sergeant major of 32 Brigade Group;

—Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Ken Lloyd, from 32 Signal Regiment;

—from the navy, Lieutenant Doug Humphries, of HMCS York;

—Michael Burns, of course, CEO of the Invictus Games; and

—Brian Weaver, who has been acknowledged, from the Royal Canadian Legion.

Also, representatives are here today from the 7th Toronto Regiment, the Toronto Scottish Regiment, the Royal Canadian Air Cadets, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Naval Association of Canada's Toronto Branch, the Royal Canadian Military Institute, St. John Ambulance and the Commissionaires.

Thank you for being at Queen's Park today for this tribute.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're honoured to have you all here. Welcome.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a great pleasure to introduce two members of my team in my minister's office: our new intern, Baani Dhillon, and my right hand who keeps me going, Deidre Beaumont.

Mr. Todd Smith: Members of the Legislature might not know this, but we actually have an internship program with the state of Ohio. For the last two months or so, I've had an intern from the University of Akron in Ohio. Today is his last day on the job. He has certainly left his mark on my office. I'd like to thank Grant Morgan, who joins us in the west lobby today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to welcome the guest of page Claire Le Donne: her sister Bridget Le Donne, who was a page here in the spring of 2015. Welcome.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure to welcome constituent Charlotte Zronik, who is here with the intern program and who was past president of the Beaches–East York Young Liberals association; and of course, my great constituent and good friend Michael Burns. Welcome.

Mr. Norm Miller: In the members' west gallery, I'd like to welcome Kelly Harris, a former Queen's Park staffer, to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a great week for Ontario colleges. This week the Tony Awards came out, and *Come From Away* has seven Tony nominations, including best musical. Sheridan, as we know, is the producer—the first college ever in the world to be nominated for a Tony. Congratulations to Michael Rubinoff and everyone else at Sheridan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was a unique introduction. Thank you.

The Minister of Citizenship.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome two outstanding individuals to the Legislature: Robert Zhu, from the University of Toronto, and Nicholas Thompson from Queen's University, who will be joining my team in the minister's office for the summer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to welcome a number of elected officials who have joined us today from the London Youth Advisory Council: Almas Farooqi, Meegan St. Denis, Kayley MacGregor, McKenzie Edwards, Asala Aladl, Grace Wu and Emma Blue. Welcome.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Earlier this morning, I had the pleasure to welcome here to Queen's Park the grade 5s from Alexander Muir/Gladstone public school, who have joined us here in the west gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I noticed that Doris Grinspun from the RNAO has just come in to the Legislature. Welcome here today.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to welcome Julia Tindal and Aidan Meffe, two interns who will be in my office all summer, to question period today.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, it's my pleasure—they're just making their way in right now—to welcome grade 10 students from West Hill Collegiate Institute in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood, and their teacher Perrell Ashby. I would like to give them a really warm welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Contrary to the belief that I only introduce people in my constituency, I like to introduce, as a tradition from the Speaker, former members who are in the gallery.

I would like to introduce the member from Beaches—East York in the 37th, 38th, 39th and 40th Parliaments, Mr. Michael Prue. Welcome. His traditional catchphrase was, "It's another day in paradise." Thank you for being here with us.

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

BATAILLE DE L'ATLANTIQUE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to turn to the member from Simcoe—Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe you will find we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to the veterans who participated in the Battle of the Atlantic and the liberation of Europe, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Haldimand—Norfolk.

1040

Mr. Toby Barrett: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition and the entire PC caucus, we are humbled

to pay tribute to the Canadians who fought and died in the defence of liberty in the Battle of the Atlantic and in every theatre of battle to ensure victory in Europe during the Second World War.

Over 2,000 courageous members of the Royal Canadian Navy gave up their lives during the Battle of the Atlantic. This was the longest battle of World War II. It also claimed the lives of over 700 members of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Obviously, these sacrifices were not made in vain, and today we commemorate their service.

For six long and arduous years, and facing German ships and U-boats, the weighty responsibility of protecting vital Allied service lines increasingly fell on Canadian shoulders. Without Canadian sacrifice in the defence of those supply lines—and the transportation of precious cargo—by the Canadian Merchant Navy, victory in Europe may not have been ours.

Canada's invaluable contribution to the war effort in the Battle of the Atlantic saw the successful completion of more than 25,000 merchant voyages from North America to British ports under our escort, with 165 million tonnes of cargo delivered.

I'm very pleased my colleague the MPP for Simcoe—Grey will be introducing later today the Merchant Navy Veterans Day Act to honour the work of merchant mariners during World War II.

Our navy began with only 13 vessels and 3,500 servicemen. By the end of the war, our capacity had grown to 375 fighting ships and more than 110,000 sailors and officers, including 6,500 women. Such was Canada's answer to the call of duty in the defence of our freedom and our friends and our values. All told, the staggering Canadian cost of defending liberty in Europe and the Asia-Pacific theatre meant that more than 42,000 Canadian defenders of freedom would not return home—this from a country of a little more than 11 million citizens, and one million served in the Armed Forces. It speaks volumes about the heart and determination of our citizens and our outsized contribution to the war effort. For those fortunate to survive, the physical and mental scars of battle would forever serve as an eternal reminder of the terrible price of war.

On May 8, 1945, after six years of fierce warfare, Germans signed the final terms of surrender, marking the end of the war in Europe.

Speaker, I grew up on war stories of my father, Lieutenant Harry B. Barrett. He manned the fore gun on board HMCS Assiniboine, a destroyer that was called on to engage and ram enemy submarines on more than one occasion. He and his mates spent years on convoy duty—young men in the dark, in the wet and in the cold—and it would be an understatement to say that the weather could be rough on the North Atlantic. My father also survived the tragedy of the Halifax fire, returning to haul out hundreds of dead, including his friend Bob Presnail.

I grew up on my father's war stories. He wrote a book about it, and then a few months ago my father crossed the bar at age 94.

So many tales of heroism that continue to inspire our admiration, the countless untold stories of bravery of our sailors, our airmen, our soldiers—and we're privileged to have some of those fine people here today.

Commander Fraser McKee joined in 1943, completing his basic training at HMCS Prevost in London before serving on board HMCS Vision and HMCS Wallaceburg.

Lance Corporal James Macaluso served in the Toronto Scottish Regiment, landed in Normandy in July 1944—Company 3 platoon, liberating Meppel in the Netherlands.

First Lieutenant Helen Kerr served as a nurse at Dieppe; Sergeant Minoru Yatabe served in the intelligence corps; Jerry Rosenberg, who is here, served on convoy duty, the corvettes, as I understand; and Kenneth May served in the Perth regiment.

From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you for your bravery and your sacrifice during those years. You have honoured the service and memory of your brothers in arms with your presence here today. For all that you have done, a grateful nation is forever in your debt.

As a reminder, we should all continue to read, watch films and continue to learn and remember what that generation, the great generation, did for us by shipping out to fight on our behalf.

Thank you to your families. Thank you to those who proudly wear the uniform today. And thank you to all who sacrificed so much not only in the Battle of the Atlantic, but in battles that ensured victory in Europe. It's something that we will never forget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Mr. Paul Miller: It is an honour to stand today and to remember the contributions of so many Canadian men and women to whom we owe such a great debt.

On May 8, we will once again mark the anniversary of VE day. Canadians defended British cities and the British coast from the Luftwaffe during the desperate defence of the Battle of Britain. Canadians broke the Hitler Line in central Italy, helping to break Nazi Germany in Italy. Canadians landed on Juno Beach as part of the liberation of France. Canadians fought valiantly to liberate Belgium and the Netherlands. And Canadians were critical to the victory in the Battle of the Atlantic, without which an isolated Britain could not have endured, nor a successful liberation of western Europe could have been launched.

Most of us in this Legislature were not alive during the Second World War, but most of our parents, our uncles and our aunts were. Through them, we retain a deep personal connection to the struggles and sacrifices of those times.

I, too, inherited a connection to those times, especially to the Battle of the Atlantic. My father was a chief petty officer stationed in St. John's, Newfoundland. My uncle Stu was a gunner on the HMCS Woodstock. My uncle Bill was a chief stoker in the navy and survived two ships that were torpedoed and sunk in the Atlantic on convoy duty. All three saw most of their service in the Battle of the Atlantic. Almost like family, my uncle Alec served in

the RCAF as a fighter pilot during the gruelling siege of Malta.

More than one million men and women served in Canada's Armed Forces during the Second World War; that's one in 10 Canadians. These quiet men and women seldom spoke of the times of bravery and courage they had to show, of the pain and sacrifice they had seen and endured. Few communities were spared the loss of a son or a daughter. Most lost several; some lost many.

We have several veterans of the Second World War here today with us, who have already been introduced twice. Thank you for your bravery and sacrifice. Canada will always be in your debt.

Speaker, each year on the first Sunday in May, Canadians commemorate those lost at sea in the longest single campaign of the Second World War. For six long years, the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Merchant Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force were at the centre of the Battle of the Atlantic, the longest battle in Canadian military history.

From the beginning of the hostilities between the British Empire and Nazi Germany, the Atlantic supply routes between North America and the United Kingdom were under constant threat. By the summer of 1940, Germany had seized almost the entire western coast of Europe, from the northern tip of Norway to Biarritz on the French-Spanish border. They used their control of these harbours and airfields to try to strangle the supply lifelines to Britain.

Operating out of Halifax, Canadian Forces guarded the vital supply lines of troops, munitions, food and raw materials sailing across the Atlantic. Shipping travelled in convoys to provide protection from attack by air and sea, particularly the menace of the German U-boats.

At the beginning of the war, Canada was a minor naval power, with only 13 ships and 3,500 personnel. By the war's end, Canada had the third-largest navy in the world, comprising 373 fighting ships and more than 110,000 servicemen and servicewomen.

1050

The HMCS Haida, which sank more surface tonnage than any other Canadian warship, is the most famous ship of the battle for Canadians and is now docked in my hometown of Hamilton, at the waterfront, as a national historic site.

More than 25,000 merchant ship voyages crossed the Atlantic under the escort of the Canadian Forces, delivering 165 million tonnes of cargo.

Our success in the Battle of the Atlantic was indispensable to the Allied victory in World War II. The sacrifices were great, Speaker; the cost was heavy: 2,000 members of the Royal Canadian Navy were killed, the vast majority in the Battle of the Atlantic; 752 members of the Royal Canadian Air Force died in maritime operations; and nearly 1,600 Canadians and Newfoundlanders are commemorated in the book of remembrance for our merchant navy.

Those volunteers—our veterans—made great sacrifices for Canada and for our freedom, but it's hard for

any of us today to appreciate just how high the price of liberty was. More than 47,000 Canadian men and women never returned from the Second World War. Today, we remember each and every one of them—we remember those who never returned from Europe, Asia, Africa and the oceans, and we remember those who did return.

Time takes its toll on all of us, including our veterans, but those who stand with us, they stand proud. Those of us in this place have a special responsibility to honour all our veterans of all ages and to treat them with the dignity and the respect they deserve. Lest we forget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to say how honoured I am to be able to stand and to acknowledge the veterans who are here with us today and to thank them for their service as we commemorate the Battle of the Atlantic; and to also thank the member for Haldimand-Norfolk and the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for their personal stories. I think that it's extremely important that we make those connections to people who have served, as we talk about the past and as we remember so that we do not repeat.

We're joined by veterans who served in the Royal Canadian Navy, who fought on the battlefields in Europe and who tended to the wounded in Canadian army hospitals.

I spoke to a couple of you before I came down, and I want to thank you for all that you did. At least two of you said to me, "We had a pretty good time," and I said, nonetheless, that you took huge risks. I know you were 17 or 18, so you thought you were immortal, but we are very, very grateful to you for the risks that you took and for what you fought for. Thank you so very much.

Can you hear me, Helen? Okay. Helen said that she had a little bit of trouble hearing. Thank you so much.

I also want to recognize Michael Burns, the CEO of the Invictus Games, which Toronto is hosting this September.

Thank you all for being here.

C'est un honneur de prendre la parole aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée législative pour commémorer la bataille de l'Atlantique et reconnaître tous ceux qui ont donné leur vie au cours de cette bataille.

Thank you so much, all of you, for being here.

In September 1939, a German submarine fired the first shots into the Atlantic, hitting a passenger ship on its way to Montreal. Mere hours later, Britain declared war on Germany, and a week after that, Canada followed suit.

At that time, as has been said, our navy was incredibly small, with only 3,500 sailors. But by the end of the war, we had one of the largest navies in the world. Our fleet played a critical role and a fraught role escorting the hundreds of convoys that would gather in Nova Scotia to make the treacherous journey across the unforgiving battleground that was the Atlantic Ocean. In total, more than 70,000 Allied sailors, merchant mariners and airmen lost their lives during the battle, including well over 4,000 Canadians.

Merchant mariners suffered the greatest losses. One in seven died making the journey to deliver the goods that fuelled the Allies' efforts. I want to thank the member opposite for recognizing merchant mariners and bringing that bill forward. Thank you very much.

Yet, throughout the war, the Battle of the Atlantic did not get a lot of attention. The headlines and newsreels were focused on the fighting in Europe and, later, the Pacific. But if not for the efforts of Canadians in keeping food and supplies headed to the British, who were slowly starving under the Nazi blockade, the war in Europe might have been lost. In fact, Winston Churchill has said that the Battle of the Atlantic was the closest the Allies came to losing the war. The Germans knew that if they could disrupt or cut off the supply of food, oil and equipment between North America and Europe, they could guarantee victory. Canadians had a job to do, and they bravely stepped up.

In the battle's early years, it was clear that the Germans had an advantage over the Allies, thanks in large part to their wolf pack strategy. Groups of submarines would spread out across a convoy route and when one sub spotted a convoy, they would call out to the rest. Once the subs were together, they would strike, hitting several ships at once. It seemed impossible to beat this strategy.

But all was not lost. By 1943, Britain had cracked the Germans' Enigma code and were able to better track where submarines were located. Canadians developed new aircraft that gave better coverage of the Atlantic and we doubled down on our shipbuilding efforts.

The tide was turning. Although the Allied ships were now on the offensive, the fight for control over the Atlantic was far from over. The conflict continued until May 8, 1945, with Canadians proudly serving until its final day.

Still, it wasn't until well after the end of the fighting that the sacrifice of those who won us the Battle of the Atlantic was properly recognized by our country. That rightly changed when merchant mariners were afforded the status that they deserve, alongside the veterans of the Royal Canadian Navy who served as their partners in this battle.

Today we honour the sailors, merchant mariners and airmen who fought and died in the Battle of the Atlantic. We honour the bravery and courage of all veterans in the face of darkness and destruction, and we show our eternal gratitude for all they gave while defending the values we hold dear.

Nous glorifions la mémoire de ceux qui ont fait leur service et de tous ceux qui se sont sacrifiés, mais il est certain que nous ne glorifions pas la guerre.

We do not glorify war, but we glorify those who fought and preserved our values. May we never forget their sacrifice.

Thank you so much. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their very thoughtful comments and their powerful words to pay tribute to these great people—heroes, indeed.

A personal thank you: This place is here because of you, and we thank you for that.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CITY OF TORONTO

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

The headline in the Toronto Star read: "Premier Kathleen Wynne Blasts John Tory Over His Budget Complaints." The Premier refused to meet with Mayor Ford, and now the Premier is attacking Mayor John Tory. There is one common denominator here in this equation, and that's the Premier.

I'd like to give the Premier a chance to apologize to Mayor Tory for this recent attack. Will the Premier do the right thing?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have a very strong working relationship with John Tory. We have a long, long-standing relationship, one born in conflict, but forged in those days of conflict into a very strong bond. We have a very collegial and collaborative style.

The reality is that there's a disagreement at this moment, and I understand that there will be disagreements from time to time. But my modus operandi is to keep talking to make sure that we find a way through the challenges and that we get to a good place, because the people of this province and the people of this city and every municipality in Ontario want all levels of government working together. They know that that's how problems get solved and that's how government and communities are strong.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1100

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier is talking about her great relationship at Toronto city hall. The Premier said, "There are statements being made out of city hall that are simply not true." She implied that she wasn't having a "fact-based" debate and conversation with Mayor John Tory and Toronto city council. The Premier is trying to imply that Mayor John Tory and his city council are not telling the truth to the people of Ontario. She might as well be saying, "Liar, liar, pants on fire," the way she's castigating this city hall.

This is not a constructive relationship. The way the Premier is attacking Toronto—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. If we need to return to the last couple of days with warnings, I will fulfill that, and I will not take a long time to decide to do it.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, this attack on the mayor and Toronto city hall is not acceptable for a proper working relationship. So let's give the Premier one more

chance: Will you apologize to the mayor of Toronto and Toronto city hall?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just talk about this relationship with the city of Toronto. Let me first talk about it in the context of investments in transit and transportation infrastructure, because I believe that one of the largest challenges confronting not just the city of Toronto but the region of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area is transportation. So let's talk about some of the investments. We are funding, we must not forget, 70% of the transit projects that are being built in the city of Toronto right now. Those include \$5.3 billion for the Eglinton Crosstown; \$1.2 billion for the Finch West LRT; \$3.7 billion for GO regional express rail within Toronto, which will enable SmartTrack, which is the plan that the mayor ran on; \$150 million for planning and design for work on the Toronto relief line, which is a future project. We are showing Toronto a lot of love.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Surprise, surprise, there is no apology to the mayor, and the Premier seems to be okay with the fact that she called Toronto city hall and the mayor a liar. That's not a proper relationship with Toronto city hall.

Now, let's see the specifics of what Mayor Tory has raised as legitimate concerns for the city of Toronto.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. We're going to warnings. That's enough.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Toronto Community Housing has an ambitious 10-year, \$2.6-billion capital plan. The city, the province and the federal government all need to be part of this. The city has made their commitment. The federal government stated that they're interested in paying their share. The province, other than a few energy retrofits: absolutely nothing.

Mayor Tory is right to be upset. Toronto city hall is right to be upset that this government is absent from the conversation.

One more opportunity to the Premier: Will you support the city of Toronto? Will you apologize to the mayor of Toronto? Will you do the right thing for the people of Toronto?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Will we support the city of Toronto? Yes, absolutely, and we are. Let me talk about housing, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont is warned and the Minister of Community Safety is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Look, I'm glad that the federal government is interested in investing in housing. We're actually investing in housing: \$2 billion in afford-

able and sustainable housing across the province over the next three years. And on Toronto specifically, \$130 million for social housing repair, \$340 million for homelessness prevention, \$130 million for affordable housing and, a specific request by the mayor of Toronto, provincial land worth up to \$100 million to build 2,000 new affordable rental housing units in the city.

Mr. Speaker, we are there, we are investing, and we are working with the city and with the federal government because we need all players at the table. But we're already there.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Why did the Liberals block an attempt to put cameras on school buses to catch drivers who are blowing by school bus stop signs? Can the Premier explain why her Liberals did this?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Transportation is going to want to speak to this, but let me just say that we are very eager to see a piece of legislation go through committee that would make school zones safer, that would allow—because remember, Mr. Speaker, school zones are not just about school buses. They are about all the kids who walk to school, whose parents drive them to school, and we believe—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex is warned.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We believe, as municipal leaders from different parts of the province have asked, that having the opportunity to have photo radar in those districts will keep communities safer. That's what municipal leaders have asked us for, and we're very eager to get that piece of legislation through. We wish that the opposition was as eager to get that legislation through committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier did not answer my question. The question was, why did the Liberal members vote down an attempt to make sure that you can't have drivers drive right by a school bus?

It happens all the time. A Mississauga pilot project found that each bus had on average two blow-bys a day. Children are at risk, and we have the Premier answering an unrelated question. I want to know why they voted down this amendment. I want to know why Liberals are saying no to a common-sense idea.

It shouldn't matter that it's a Conservative amendment. It shouldn't matter that it's a good idea from this side. Do the right thing for children. No more partisan games. Support our children. Will you support this amendment? We'll do it again: Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I know we covered some of this ground yesterday. I've said not only in this chamber, but to media and repeatedly, that any measure that can be brought forward that will help us deal with those who are most vulnerable on our roads, on our streets, supporting our municipalities like Toronto, Ottawa and so many others, is something that the Ministry of Transportation and this government will always look at very seriously.

Speaker, I think it's really important to note that there is nothing that currently stops school buses from having cameras on them at this current time. In fact, in some communities like Ottawa, there are pilot programs for which this technology has already been deployed.

But fundamentally what this is about today, this question from the leader of that party, following up on the situation that took place in this chamber yesterday—

Mr. Todd Smith: That's pathetic.

Mr. Steve Clark: Dodge, deflect and dive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is warned, and the member from Leeds-Grenville is warned. If you haven't got the message, I'll give it to you.

Finish.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker.

Fundamentally, that leader is embarrassed, and rightly so, because day after day after day in this chamber during debate on Bill 65, his members stood up and repeatedly threw every single ploy at the wall to try and delay passage. They've repeated the same shameful behaviour at committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: They brought forward hundreds of amendments to this legislation to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I remind the minister that when I stand, you sit.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question was about having cameras on school buses to prevent cars that simply drive by and put schoolchildren's safety at risk. This government is good at answering different questions. They do not want to explain why their members voted down this reasonable amendment.

I get it. There are politics at play here. It was a good idea from a Progressive Conservative MPP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: A good idea from a Progressive Conservative MPP shouldn't be voted down by the government majority simply because it's not a Liberal idea. So here's another opportunity.

If you want to find someone who also supports this idea, Mayor Bonnie Crombie: "Our children are being subjected to a high rate of risk of injury or fatality every time they exit school buses because a concerning number of drivers simply do not stop when school buses stop to let off."

Bonnie Crombie wants cameras on school buses. Parents want cameras on school buses to protect their children. Will the government do the right thing, and not this petty, partisan politics of voting against a motion that they know is in the best interests of our children?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I said in my initial response here today on this that there is currently nothing that stops this technology from being used. Communities like Ottawa, Mississauga and others have been contemplating deploying this technology. Pilot programs exist. I'm sure more of that will take place.

1110

Again, let me stress that the Ministry of Transportation will always take a serious look at any measure that is brought forward that will actually help us deal with road safety. But again, this question, this line of questioning, the press releases that have gone out and the shameful behaviour of that leader Patrick Brown's members at committee this week, with more than 300 amendments put forward to delay and disrupt this bill, Bill 65, from passing committee, coming back to third reading here in this chamber so it can be considered—fundamentally, it is disgraceful. It's something not befitting a leader. It's not befitting members of his caucus. We should be working together on this. It's about the kids. It's about vulnerable road users. We want Bill 65 passed, and I call on that leader and that member—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier.

Yesterday, this Legislature heard about Olive Bird from Sudbury. Olive spent two nights in the ER, 20 nights in the hospital TV room and one night in the shower room.

All across Ontario, people in our hospitals are being treated in hallways, broom closets, TV rooms and in the showers.

Stories like Olive's are the result of a decade of Liberal cuts. The Premier should take a moment and ask herself why the government is crowing about a budget that is \$300 million short of the hospital funding that's needed.

Will this Premier take responsibility for creating this horror story in our hospitals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have invested, as a result of this budget, an additional \$7 billion for health care over the next three years, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that there is a need for this kind of investment,

and that includes over \$500 million in funding—over half a billion dollars—specifically for Ontario's hospitals. That represents a 2% minimum funding increase for each hospital around the province and, across the board, an over 3% increase.

So we recognize that there is a need for hospitals, and we have heard from the Ontario Hospital Association that this is a substantial increase. We also recognize that there is a need for increased investment in home care and for the OHIP+ pharmacare plan which will allow young people from the age of zero to 24 to access free medication. All of that recognizes health care as fundamental to this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There are stories like Olive's all across our province. Jamie-Lee Ball is here in the Legislature today. I want to thank her for speaking up. She showed up at Brampton Civic Hospital with internal bleeding. As a result of the Premier's cuts to hospital budgets, instead of getting care in a hospital room, Jamie-Lee spent five days on a stretcher in a hallway.

Does the Premier think that that's acceptable, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First, let me just say to Jamie-Lee, I am sorry that that happened to you and I think we need to recognize that those situations shouldn't happen.

That is exactly why, Mr. Speaker, there is such a substantial increase in funding in our budget for health care across the province, including a substantial increase in funding directly to hospitals. We will continue to work as the health care system transforms, because the reality is that there is more need for care in communities.

There's also need for investment in capital. I was at the Trillium health centre this week to announce, with the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance, increased funding so that there could be a new facility built in that region. That is happening across the province, and we recognize that, on top of that, the increase to operating budgets is extremely important.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: These situations are happening because this Premier and her government have made them happen. It is their fault that these things are happening. They caused these things to happen. Hallway medicine is absolutely a direct result of Liberal cuts. Introducing a budget that barely keeps up with inflation does not fix the problem either, Speaker.

So let's be clear: This budget will not fix hospital overcrowding. It won't end hallway medicine. It's a slap in the face to the Olives and the Jamie-Lees and every other person in Ontario who is stacked up in a hospital hallway, a broom closet, a TV room, a shower.

Will the Premier take responsibility for a decade of Liberal health cuts, stop bragging about a budget that barely keeps up with inflation and commit to actually fixing this problem for the patients that use hospitals here in Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The Minister of Economic Development and Growth is warned.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Brampton Civic, which is part of the William Osler Health System, they're facing unprecedented population growth there as well. That's why we increased the budget last year of that hospital system by 6.5%, by \$31 million. That's why, just recently, several weeks ago, the Premier opened the Peel Memorial wellness centre, which is in the same catchment area, to provide and enhance health services to that population.

This year alone: more than half a billion dollars, a 3% increase to the bottom line, the base funding for our hospitals. We're currently building or redeveloping 35 hospitals. The new Mississauga hospital, as well, was built. I've said clearly to Ms. Ball,

I've said clearly in this Legislature, that it's completely unacceptable what happened to you at Brampton Civic. That's why we're making these investments, so that your situation never happens again.

PHARMACARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Yesterday I was in Peterborough, where I met Louise. She has asthma and COPD, and she is older than 24. She pays \$300 a month out of her own pocket for her drug insurance. That's \$3,600 a year. Under our plan, Louise wouldn't be paying out of pocket for insurance. Why is this Premier refusing Louise coverage for the medications that she needs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, there actually is no disagreement between the leader of the third party and me and our party on the need for a national pharmacare plan that would cover all Canadians across this country. It's something we've been advocating for for a number of years. Our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has taken the lead on that.

As a result of this budget, we will have in place a program as of January 1, 2018, that will cover four million Ontarians, young people from the age of 0 until their 25th birthday. All of their medications for all of their conditions—that's more than 4,400 medications—will be covered by OHIP+ pharmacare.

This is a huge leap forward, Mr. Speaker. This is the biggest change in medicare in—I say a generation; the Minister of Health says since medicare came into place. We know that there's more to be done, and we look for that national pharmacare plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the people of Ontario look to the government to lead on a national pharmacare plan by starting right here in Ontario, and they are not leading.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Order.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Another drug plan is not universal pharmacare. That health minister knows it, and that Premier knows it. For pharmacare to really work, it needs to be universal, bottom line.

Dr. Steve Morgan is one of the pre-eminent experts on pharmacare in our country. He wrote responding to the Liberal budget and their drug plan, and he said the Liberal drug plan will provide “coverage to the age group that uses medicines the least often. Many working-age Ontarians, who are far more likely to require medicines than children, will still remain uninsured.”

Universal pharmacare—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Ottawa South is warned.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I think we should all be celebrating the fact that Ontario is demonstrating leadership to the rest of Canada, demonstrating that national pharmacare is possible, that when we take those bold and correct decisions, we will arrive at a place where all Ontarians, all Canadians, are able to access the full complement of medicines—in Ontario's case, that's more than 4,400 medicines—and they should be able to do so without any annual deductible and without any co-payment.

I know the member opposite was in Peterborough yesterday. I hope when she spoke with families and the media, she told them of our pharmacare program coming on January 1, subject to the budget being passed, which will benefit 34,000 children and young people in Peterborough alone.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have to say I was somewhat surprised that more than 11,000 families in Peterborough have children. They will benefit from this program—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —and starting the beginning—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, according to the experts, working-age people need drug coverage the most. Apparently, the Liberals just don't care about them, because the Liberal drug plan will not help them. It will leave people like Louise and thousands and thousands of other people in Peterborough, millions of people around the province, paying thousands and thousands of dollars out of their own pockets for the medications they need. Even worse, it leaves millions of people unable to even afford the medications they should be taking.

Will this Premier actually step up to the plate, be real with the people of Ontario, be honest with the folks out

there and realize that the only way to get to a national pharmacare plan is by taking that step here in Ontario and having a real universal pharmacare plan, not another drug plan in our province?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, their plan is not universal. They have a copayment that is income-tested. They have 4,275 fewer drugs than we do. They have an aspirational target of 2020. Ours begins January 1 next year.

Mr. Speaker, Nav Persaud, an expert—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, if you want to resign now—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Call the election early.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport is warned.

I'm not losing my resolve.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Steve Morgan, an expert on pharmacare, who stood side by side with the leader of the third party as she made her announcement, said bravo to our program. He said it's critically important. Nav Persaud, who's another expert here in Toronto, said this announcement is potentially historic. Danielle Martin lauded it and applauded it as well. Virtually every expert out there is saying our plan is a giant leap forward towards universal pharmacare.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. We've been asking questions all week long about the troubled mortgage lender Home Capital and their chairman, Kevin Smith. They received a \$2-billion bailout from the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan, or HOOPP, where the same Kevin Smith is also on their board. Now, Jim Keohane is HOOPP's CEO, and he was also on the board of Home Capital. You see, Speaker, both guys are with both companies, the borrower and the lender. So, after the \$2-billion deal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The second conversation taking place goes outside. Somebody's already on the warning list, which means you can't come back.

Finish, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: After the \$2-billion deal was done, they resigned from each other's board, all within 24 hours. Does anybody believe this passes the smell test? Where is the oversight? I ask the Premier for a definitive

answer. Is an investigation into this perceived conflict of interest under way?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question.

Yet again, we have made it clear that OSFI, which is the federal regulator overseeing Home Capital, is involved. We have the Ontario Securities Commission, which is the regulator, also involved and which predicated some of what's happening now because they're doing their job in regard to the activities of Home Capital. Furthermore, we have FSCO, which is the provincial regulator, which has also been involved throughout the process and has already taken action against two individuals.

The member is making accusations with regard to some of the directors on the board. He's rightly stated they have resigned to avoid conflicts of interest. But the matter is before the regulators. It is being reviewed. We're allowing them to do their job. Even the federal Minister of Finance has referenced that as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier, please: As chair of Home Capital, Kevin Smith earns \$357,000 a year, for a total of \$1.5 million in stock. This is a big job. He attended 31 meetings last year. The company is troubled. They're under OSC investigation. Their depositors are leaving. Their stock is tumbling. This is all-hands-on-deck time.

But Smith is also the \$720,000-a-year CEO of St. Joseph's Health System and Niagara Health System. He earns \$14,000 a week and took six of those weeks just to attend Home Capital's meetings. His hospital contract states, "The employee shall devote the whole of his working time and attention to the business and affairs of the system." If the government is paying that kind of money, you would expect full-time service.

While the Premier has been cutting and gutting St. Joe's and other hospitals, where was Kevin Smith?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, the member opposite rightly understands and knows that both Home Capital and HOOPP are independent of government. They are private organizations, and the directors themselves have fiduciary duties primarily to support and protect the interests of their respective companies. That is what we regulate. That is what is being done as we speak.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Eighty-five per cent of Ontarians want Hydro One to stay public. Public ownership means money for our hospitals and for our schools. It means lower costs for families and for businesses. It means ensuring our electricity system serves Ontarians instead of private investors.

Can the Premier tell Ontarians why her budget doubles down on the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, I am pleased to talk about the great work that Hydro One is doing at

becoming a better-run company, being more customer focused and recognizing that they can do better, and we've seen that.

When it comes to broadening the ownership of Hydro One, we're on track to raise the \$9 billion, and \$4 billion of that will be going directly to infrastructure: \$13.5 billion in the GTHA; GO regional express rail will quadruple the number of weekly trips to 6,000; \$5.3 billion in the Eglinton Crosstown LRT; tripling the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund to \$300 million, which will then continue to see more infrastructure built in this province.

We're building Ontario up. We're creating jobs. Broadening the ownership of Hydro One is one small part of our overall plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: People think selling Hydro One is a bad idea. Businesses think selling Hydro One is a bad idea. Energy experts think selling Hydro One is a bad idea. In fact, everyone thinks selling Hydro One is a bad idea. I would guess a large number of MPPs on that side of the chamber think it's a bad idea, and I know their constituents think it's a bad idea.

The Premier could have shown that she gets it. The budget could have stopped the sell-off. People got a message from the budget: The only way to stop the sell-off of Hydro One is to change government. Does the Premier get that?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm sure the people in Mississauga and Brampton think the \$1.4 billion in the Hurontario LRT is a good idea. The people in the Waterloo regional area see their regional transit hub of \$43 million as a good idea. I know \$173 million being spent to expand Highway 69 and making that a four-lane highway—I know the folks in Sudbury think that's a good idea.

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The one thing I know that the people of Ontario don't think is a good idea is that party.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

M^{me} Cristina Martins: Ma question est pour la ministre de l'Éducation.

One of our top priorities is to support our children with the best possible start in life through our publicly funded education system. Our government has made significant gains in all four publicly funded education systems to provide a strong foundation for our students. Each year, during the first week of May, Ontario's education community comes together to honour student achievement and education excellence.

I know that last month, our government announced the details of the Grants for Student Needs for the upcoming school year.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you share with this House the great investments this government is making to help better support students in the classroom and continue to improve education for our children?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Merci, monsieur le Président, and I want to say merci to the member from Davenport for her great question. I want to thank her for the work she's doing on behalf of her constituents. We were just there this morning with students from the French public and French Catholic school board. It was a great morning.

I also want to welcome the students who are visiting Queen's Park today and those who are watching—because this is Education Week. It is time to pay tribute to the dedication and commitment of students, parents, teachers and education workers across this province.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who works tirelessly to support Ontario's children and students.

Guided by our renewed vision for education, Ontario's publicly funded education system continues to build on its world-class reputation.

I was proud to announce that Ontario is increasing its investments to students and to schools. This coming school year, total education funding will increase to \$23.8 billion. That's an increase of approximately \$879 million, \$12,100 per student.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Merci à la ministre. We are extremely proud of the accomplishments and investments we continue to make in education. I was pleased to join you, Minister, in my riding of Davenport this morning à l'École secondaire Toronto Ouest and l'école secondaire Saint-Frère-André to meet with students and Principals Sharp and Wambo. I know that for them and for students and educators across Ontario, this means smaller class sizes, more staff in special education and a focus on local community needs.

This year, we are also marking another important occasion. Canada and Ontario are celebrating their 150th anniversaries. Schools provide an essential space to enhance understanding of our shared history and to build our collective future. That's why I'm pleased to hear that Ontario150 is the theme of this year's Education Week.

Minister, can you please tell us how we are celebrating Education Week and Ontario150, engaging parents and students—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: To the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

L'hon. Eleanor McMahon: Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président, et merci beaucoup à la députée de Davenport pour sa question.

Our 150th anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on how much we can accomplish when we work together and also a chance to engage our next generation, our students.

The Ministry of Education and my ministry have made empowering youth a priority in this year's celebration. That's why we've created a youth partnership program. This Ontario150 youth partnership program is supporting 87 youth-led projects that will give youth exciting opportunities to actively participate in their communities, both inside and outside the classroom.

We're funding a great range of exciting and unique projects, including youth leadership programs, dance and theatre workshops, women's hockey programs, and entrepreneurship programs for indigenous youth in remote First Nations communities. As we celebrate Ontario's legacy, these projects will chart our future.

Mr. Speaker, this Education Week, we have much to celebrate. And as the song goes, we are a place to stand and a place to grow. We are Ontario.

HOUSING POLICY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance claims their plan is going to stabilize the real estate market and stop the out-of-control price increases of housing. Can he explain why his budget document predicts an increase of almost \$500 million in land transfer taxes next year?

Does the minister still expect the price of homes to increase that much, or is that number wrong?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, transactions of real estate activity will continue. In fact, economists and independent individuals predicted even greater activity throughout the years. We tempered that amount just to be prudent, and that's how it's proceeding.

In regard to the market itself, the measures that we've taken to address and cool demand, and at the same time increase supply into the mix, are appropriate measures to provide greater predictability and sustainability. But market forces will prevail, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt of that. What we want to make certain, though, is that we provide certain measures and assistance while we proceed forward in the marketplace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It appears the government has no idea what they're doing when it comes to housing. One day the Minister of Finance says foreign homebuyers are 8% of the market. The next day he says they are only 5% of the market. Now the Toronto Real Estate Board says that it's less than 1% of the market.

He claims the foreign homebuyers' tax will stabilize that market. But the budget documents show the government is expecting housing prices to keep rising and result in another \$500 million in land transfer tax. Either the government's housing measures are going to fail and prices will keep going up, or the government has an almost \$500-million hole in their budget. Can the minister tell us which it is?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I can tell this House that, obviously, they have no plan yet again on this file, because they've offered no solutions and no ideas.

We put forward a 16-point plan of comprehensive measures to address many things, one of which is specu-

lation. Trying to ensure that if you're a non-resident Canadian and you're speculating on someone's home—and crowding out families that want to live here, put up roots here, start a family here or build up equity here—then you're going to have to pay a little bit more. That's what we've done in this measure.

We have also done that with domestic speculators, to ensure that they don't crowd out those families, and that they too should pay their fair share. It's one of 16 measures that we're doing to increase supply, address demand and ensure the people of Ontario have a better opportunity at home ownership.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is warned.

New question.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. While there was nothing in the budget about minimum wage or any improvements to outdated labour standards for that matter, the Premier does have a new minimum wage Facebook ad up—money well spent, I'm sure. In the ad, the Premier asks Ontarians if they agree with a raise to the minimum wage. I think I can answer that question, Speaker: 70% of Ontarians have already said they want a \$15 minimum wage. One in 10 Ontario workers makes minimum wage today, and low-income work is on the rise.

Ontario New Democrats have heard these hard-working Ontarians and we committed in April 2016 to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Will the Premier commit today to raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

Speaker, on this side of the House, what we want to ensure is that every family in this province benefits from the strong economy that we have in the province of Ontario today. The world of work is changing. We're seeing jobs in place that simply didn't exist a few years ago, and we need to be aware that the world is changing.

That's precisely why this is the party, this is the government that put the Changing Workplaces Review into place almost two years ago. These gentlemen that we appointed have travelled the province of Ontario. They got advice from organized labour. They got advice from business and poverty advocates. They got advice as to what the government should do. Speaker, the report is finished. It's being translated. It will be on my desk very, very shortly. It will be in the hands of the public very, very shortly. It speaks exactly to the types of questions that the member is asking. We're prepared to do the right thing in this regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: On February 23, in response to an NDP question, the Liberal labour minister, once again, would only answer that the scheduled minimum wage

increase is predictable. He repeated the same on March 8 and again on April 25.

Any time this Liberal government has been asked if they will raise the minimum wage, the answer has always been the same: predictable.

So, I ask again, Speaker, will the Premier commit to raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour today—predictably?

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Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: As the Premier said publicly, this is about more than just protecting people's wages and their ability to earn a good living. It's about that, but it's about so much more. It's about the way that the world of work is changing.

What we did a few years back is that we got all parties that were interested in this around the same table. We established a process. We set a foundation for the minimum wage. We got opinions from organized labour, from business, from poverty advocates, from everybody—from the workers themselves. We got everybody who was interested in this issue around the same table. We put a process in place that, for the past few years, has worked very, very well.

What I will say is that at the time we tried to get everybody who was interested to the table, the NDP didn't come to the table. That was the time to speak out. They were missing in action when they were needed the most.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for the poverty reduction strategy.

Evidence shows that the 1991 exemption on rent controls has not resulted in new rental units being built. In fact, in Ontario, 14,000 rental units were built in 1991, yet, five years later, after rent controls were removed for new builds, the number of new rental units dropped to under 1,000.

According to housing lawyer Timothy Collins, "Rent regulations have been the single greatest source of affordable housing for middle- and low-income households."

Despite this evidence, the official opposition refuses to accept that rent controls are not the reason why developers are not constructing new units. Instead of looking at the facts, the opposition has voted against a motion that would have fast-tracked the Rental Fairness Act. The longer the opposition stalls, the longer tenants will have to go without protection from unreasonable rent hikes.

Speaker, can the minister please explain to this House how rent control is very important to strengthening our communities?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member from Beaches—East York for his question and his continued advocacy on this very important issue.

The economist Joshua Mason argues that rent controls "give tenants a greater stake in their community and

incentivize them to put time, energy, and even money into their homes."

As Liberals, we believe in inclusive neighbourhoods, where people have the confidence to put down roots. The full removal of the 1991 exemption would ultimately result in better outcomes for tenants and significantly improve housing affordability in Ontario.

We do not want to create another two-tier rental market housing system, where tenants in newer units are vulnerable to unaffordable rent increases. Going forward, every renter in Ontario will have the peace of mind of knowing their rent is not going to increase beyond roughly the rate of inflation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thanks to the minister for his very complex and very thoughtful response to finding opportunities for affordable housing in Ontario.

Last week, I had the opportunity to listen to a lot of the debate on the Rental Fairness Act. As you know, Speaker, the act would expand rent controls to all rental units, including those built or occupied after 1991. If passed, the bill will bring predictability, affordability and opportunity to Ontario's rental market.

But during debate, the official opposition party has made it clear that they believe expanding rent controls would, as the member from Oxford said, "create the biggest chill on building in the rental market." The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook even referenced an overly dramatic quote, stating that "after bombing, nothing destroys a city sooner than rent control."

Would the minister please set the record straight and explain to the House how extending rent controls, along with the suite of incentives that are contained in the fair housing plan, will not restrain but will encourage the building of new rental units?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Again, I'd like to thank the member from Beaches—East York for the question.

It's regrettable that the official opposition needs to paint such an unpleasant view of the world to justify their positions. The fact of the matter is that Ontario is constantly ranked as one of the top places to live in terms of stability, health care, education, environment and infrastructure. As a result, people are moving to and investing in Ontario.

I would also like to point out that 80% of the rental market is currently protected by rent control. And do you know what, Speaker? These rental units continue to appreciate in value and attract new capital investment.

The real world is nothing like the grim world view of the opposition. The reality is that by passing this bill—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Health. On Monday we learned that in the last 10 years, there has been a 60% increase in hospitalizations and

emergency room visits by children and youth due to mental health disorders.

The minister responded by suggesting that drugs were the answer. Does the minister truly believe that the solution for this mental health crisis is providing free drugs?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm quite certain that that wouldn't have been my response.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Read the Hansard.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'll give the opportunity to the member opposite to perhaps clarify her recollection, in the supplementary.

I am very proud of the investments that we have made and are making in children's, youths' and adults' mental health. In fact, when we first launched our five-year plan for mental health—which came out of a select committee of all parties that gave remarkable advice to this government—we focused, in the first instance, on children's mental health. We were able to expand the services to more than 50,000 additional children who would benefit. We made investments in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars.

In fact, we've continued that important work. We're investing in that critically important transitional period—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —mental health services for youth.

I'm happy to talk—including about what we announced in the budget last week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you. I'm pleased that you are talking about the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, but that was eight years ago, Minister.

Today, 12,000 children and youth are waiting for mental health services in Ontario. In Toronto, the average wait time for counselling and therapy service is 208 days. In Barrie, the wait time is 354 days. In Ottawa, children wait 575 days for mental health services.

Our kids can't wait. Instead of suggesting that drugs are the answer, when will this minister ensure timely access to counselling and therapy service for our children?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the member opposite mentioned Barrie. I might have to defer to the member from Barrie for part of this answer, because not that long ago, several months ago, we announced a brand new child and youth mental health service in Barrie at the Royal Victoria hospital, an in-patient service but also an outpatient service, which is going to benefit tens of thousands of children and youth in that area.

That's merely one example of the investments that we're making. Also, \$140 million of additional funds was announced in this budget for cognitive behavioural therapy, for a proven psychotherapy intervention which is remarkably effective for individuals, including children and youth, who have mood disorders such as anxiety and depression—and 1,150 new supportive housing units.

These are the kinds of investments that we continue to make, not just for children and youth but for the entire population.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the minister of corrections and community safety.

I, along with other Ontarians, would like to first thank and acknowledge the province's correctional staff for the vital work that they do each and every day on our behalf.

New Democrats have long called for a new approach to corrections, away from the overcrowded and thereby dangerous facilities in Ontario that have become warehouses. We don't forget that Adam Capay was held in administrative isolation in the Thunder Bay jail for four years before staff and the Human Rights Commissioner—not the minister—first sounded the alarm about his conditions.

Speaker, when will the Liberal minister provide the resources that have been missing to implement and enable the recommendations of the Ombudsman, Mr. Sapers, and others to use administrative segregation as a last resort? When will you end indefinite segregation?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to thank the member for his question. I certainly reiterate the great work that our correctional officers are doing every single day in Ontario—our parole and probation officers.

I also want to say thank you to Mr. Sapers for his report today. I think that the concerns that Mr. Sapers and the Ombudsman are raising are deeply concerning and completely unacceptable. I acknowledge, and we acknowledge, that we must do better. We must do better.

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Mr. Sapers has recognized the important initiatives in action that our ministry has already taken. He points out this government's commitment to transform our correctional system. He also clearly points out where we have challenges in the system, and that there's much more work to be done.

I announced today, and I will go on in my supplementary about, some key initiatives that we are taking in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The use of administrative segregation and isolation has only increased after 14 years of Liberal government. Now they can't wait to fix it. Yes, more beds are needed, but correctional staff, inmates and the public don't need another poorly, privately built Toronto South facility, with its broken locks and windows and unused nursing stations.

Speaker, Ontarians want to know: Will this late-to-the-game money be another Liberal make-their-friends-rich scheme, with correctional staff left to pick up the pieces?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to say very clearly in this House, Mr. Speaker, that segregation will only be used as the absolute last resort. I want to point out the extremely difficult conditions our correctional officers and our staff are working in every day, and the tremendous work that they actually do.

I have touched upon a number of reforms, as I alluded to this morning. I want to talk to you about some of the designs that our current facilities have. It's called warehousing inmates. When we talk about transformation

within our correctional system, I think it's important that we look at everything. That's why this morning we talked about introducing new legislation looking at the definition of segregation and improving the condition of confinement. We talked about the aspect to ensure that health care is better delivered in our facilities.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to transforming our correctional—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of International Trade.

As we know, Ontario's economy is flourishing and businesses in all regions of the province are growing. Last year, our GDP grew by 2.7%, and nearly 700,000 net new jobs have been created since the global recession. Our economy is in a state that is conducive to further growth, and I know that the minister's efforts to market Ontario abroad will do just that.

Our latest budget outlines the importance of ensuring that Ontario businesses have the ability to expand abroad and grow the province's economy here at home.

Over the past decade, Ontario has made strides in diversifying exports and raising Ontario's profile internationally.

Speaker, can the minister speak to the types of supports that his ministry offers for companies looking to scale up and increase their market share in both developed and emerging markets?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Barrie for asking.

Speaker, as the member had mentioned, Ontario's economy is globally competitive and our proactive approach to diversifying trade will continue.

As part of our global trade strategy, Ontario offers a wide range of supports for local businesses that include introductory exporter education seminars and workshops, one-on-one consulting, incoming buyer programs, in-market trade supports, and outbound missions that include participation in exhibitions.

In 2015 alone, Ontario led 71 trade missions, in which 699 companies started exporting to new markets, generating an estimated \$941 million in potential export sales.

Companies around the province are taking advantage of our supports. This is resulting in the significant growth of our export capacity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It is exciting to hear about the increasing amount of companies that are making use of the ministry's trade supports as a means to diversify their revenue source.

However, with the constant shifting of the global trade climate, it is increasingly important to ensure that Ontario is not simply reliant on one single export market. One of the ways of facilitating trade with emerging markets is to work at reducing and eliminating barriers to access.

I know that business owners in my riding of Barrie appreciate the ability to freely access foreign markets thanks to the support of this ministry.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister speak to the work our government has done to reduce trade barriers and provide greater access to emerging markets?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Barrie for asking again.

Our government has long prioritized trade diversification in both the markets that we trade and the sectors that we trade within those markets. This is why our government has invested \$50 million over three years to expand Ontario's footprint in key international markets around the globe.

As the member mentioned, reducing and eliminating barriers is a good way of limiting trade dependency. This is why our government worked tirelessly to ensure that comprehensive trade agreements like CETA were signed. I know that all Ontarians will feel the benefits of this deal, as it will save \$100 million in tariffs annually, creating roughly 30,000 new Ontario jobs and boosting the province's GDP by \$4.5 billion.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is to the Minister of Education.

I read with interest your ironic news release promising consultation on rural education. It claims you recognize the value that schools bring to students and communities as a whole.

Minister, the constituents in my riding know you don't really care. If you did, you would come to Niagara and listen to the people who rely on those community schools. Instead, not a single one of your consultations—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Finish, please.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Not a single one of this minister's consultation meetings will be taking place in the Niagara region.

Will you step outside of your ivory tower, commit to ensuring Niagara has a voice in the consultation process, and promise there will be a consultation meeting in Niagara?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Davenport is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And somebody just saved somebody else from getting warned.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's a pleasure to rise and to speak about our education system, because we have one of the best publicly funded education systems in the world.

I understand the very important role of schools and the importance of schools to communities, which is exactly why we are doing an engagement across this province, with our focus on rural—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Not in Niagara.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: —with our focus on rural and northern remote communities. Just last week, I issued an engagement paper that outlines the very importance of focusing on these areas in our province. We want to ensure that we are providing the best education possible for all students across this province, and we can only do that by listening and engaging.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Nonsense, Minister. You don't even want to personally face the rural residents you're hurting. Instead, you are sending out your—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Address the Chair.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes, Speaker. The minister doesn't even want to personally face the rural residents she's hurting. Instead, she's sending out her parliamentary assistants to bear the brunt of people's anger and dutifully tell her what she wants to hear.

She shouldn't need consultations to know that rural communities don't want their schools closed. These consultations would be redundant if the minister would just issue a moratorium on school closures, but it's doubly insulting and arrogant that she didn't even want to include the communities of Niagara in her parliamentary assistants' so-called consultation sessions.

My question is very simple: Why is she ignoring the residents of Niagara and the residents of rural Ontario?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's very important that we have this consultation, because we want students to access the latest classroom technology and a wide range of options. I know we're going to hear great things when we engage with our communities.

And just so the member opposite knows, this Friday, I will be in Merrickville, along with parliamentary—

Interjection: They have a new school.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: They do have a new school there.

Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that we hear from all communities across this great province. We want to ensure that we make those investments in our students, in our communities, in our schools, so that we can provide the best publicly funded education system possible for our students across the province.

This is Education Week. We are celebrating our students, celebrating our great teachers and educators, and that's why we're engaging in these—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

DEFERRED VOTES

RENTAL FAIRNESS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN LOCATION IMMOBILIÈRE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats.

On April 25, 2017, Madame Lalonde moved second reading of Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Forster, Cindy	Murray, Glen R.
Arnott, Ted	Fraser, John	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Baker, Yvan	Gates, Wayne	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Oosterhoff, Sam
Bradley, James J.	Hoggart, Ann	Pettapiece, Randy
Brown, Patrick	Horwath, Andrea	Potts, Arthur
Campbell, Sarah	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Sylvia	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Kiwala, Sophie	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	Lalonde, Marie-France	Smith, Todd
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Tabuns, Peter
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
Del Duca, Steven	Mantha, Michael	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Vanthof, John
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Martow, Gila	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Walker, Bill
DiNovo, Cheri	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fedeli, Victor	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Yurek, Jeff
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 83; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 3, 2017, the bill is now referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education on a point of order.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I would just like to welcome an intern working in my office, a student from Humber College, Jordan Chevalier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bill Walker: Mental illness affects people of all ages, cultures, and educational and income levels. Each year, one in five Canadians experiences a mental health or addiction problem. That is a troubling statistic, and far too often, Canadians face mental health problems in silence.

That's why I'm proud to share with you today the work that Bruce Power and its partners in mental and personal health are doing to help generate conversations during Mental Health Week. Yesterday, Bruce Power launched its second annual #BreakTheSilence campaign on social media, with the goal of raising money to help support local mental health initiatives. The event was an overwhelming success, with nearly 20,000 shares on Facebook and tweets sent with the #BreakTheSilence hashtag.

While Bruce Power's commitment was \$1 per tweet or share, they decided to donate \$84,000 to local mental health initiatives in Bruce, Huron and Grey counties. This money will go toward helping residents of these counties when they need it most. I know a number of members in the Legislature participated in yesterday's campaign, including my caucus colleagues Lisa Thompson and Lisa MacLeod.

This is the second year Bruce Power has held this awareness campaign. Last year, Bruce Power donated \$80,000 to local mental health initiatives. As part of the campaign, please visit breakthesilencebgh.com, which provides an overview of other initiatives that Bruce Power has worked on to combat stigmas around mental health as well as a list of local and regional resources for people who need help.

While the 2017 #BreakTheSilence campaign is over, I'd like to encourage my colleagues in the Legislature, regardless of your party line, to join the conversation and spread the message. Mental illness is something that we should never keep silent about.

Thank you again to Bruce Power for all of your support of our communities.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month. Unfortunately, yet another year has passed and nothing has been done by this government to effectively tackle the issue.

When Lyme is not treated early or is left untreated, it is an unspeakably awful disease that wreaks havoc on every system of the human body, eventually resulting in paralysis and death. Recently, I asked this government what steps it was taking to develop a comprehensive strategy to combat Lyme disease in Ontario in light of a bombshell 10-year tick host study that was released which cited that there are eight species of Lyme-carrying ticks in the Kenora area. Kenora is already known to

have the highest infection prevalence ever reported in Canada.

Despite this damning new information and despite the fact that Lyme disease is spreading—we're anticipating that about 10,000 Canadians will be infected by the year 2020—this government has done nothing other than create a Lyme disease awareness plan. An awareness plan does a disservice to the families in the Kenora area who are worried about contracting Lyme, and it is a slap in the face to many people across Ontario who are suffering with this debilitating disease and who are forced to personally incur thousands of dollars of expensive treatments in the United States.

It has been nearly two and a half years since this House passed my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin's motion calling for a concrete and robust strategy to combat Lyme disease. When will this government stop stalling and throw a lifeline to Lyme's many victims, present and future?

LA NOUVELLE SCÈNE
GILLES DESJARDINS

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Aujourd'hui, j'aimerais vous parler de La Nouvelle Scène Gilles Desjardins, un carrefour culturel important pour la communauté francophone d'Ottawa, qui rayonne au niveau provincial, national et international.

La Nouvelle Scène a été fondée en 1999 par quatre compagnies théâtrales francophones : Vox Théâtre, le Théâtre du Trillium, le Théâtre de la Vieille 17 et le Théâtre de la Catapulte.

Each one of these theatre companies offers its own genre of production, proposing a wide range of experiences to both seasoned theatregoers and to children and those who are just getting acquainted with the arts.

Les compagnies fondatrices se promènent à travers la province et le pays pour donner accès à la culture francophone à des publics éloignés des grands centres où le français est parlé.

Not only do these companies perform on a regular basis, but they also do cultural mediation, especially with children and youth. This includes workshops and opportunities for the public to discover and to deal with their cultural differences.

La Nouvelle Scène Gilles Desjardins présente à ses spectateurs plusieurs formes d'art : la musique, la danse, les arts visuels et plusieurs autres qui continuent de captiver le public.

I want to take this opportunity today to congratulate them on their brand new infrastructure, inaugurated last September, that they have developed to become a front-line player in the francophone culture in Ottawa and beyond.

It's also a great place that they opened up for the community, really helping us reach out to broader audiences to support the arts and the francophone culture in the region, in Ottawa and beyond.

Un gros merci—

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci.

LORNE FORAN

Mr. Lorne Coe: It's a privilege to rise today and honour fallen Ontario Provincial Police officer Lorne Foran, who at 1 p.m. this afternoon had the Highway 401 east and Stevenson Road interchange bridge in Oshawa dedicated in his name to honour his 22 years of service to the province of Ontario.

He served at detachments in North Bay and Still River before he left general duty and worked in more specialized branches of the Ontario Provincial Police. In 1981, Detective Sergeant Foran received the position which he had sought for many years when he was promoted to detective inspector. Throughout his career, several crown attorneys commented on Lorne's excellent investigative abilities and dedication to his job.

Sadly, on May 4, 1982, while he was returning home from work on a case, Lorne's vehicle went off the road. He was rushed to hospital, but his injuries were too great and, sadly, an exceptional police officer died.

Today, I would like to acknowledge the dedication and public service of Detective Inspector Lorne Foran and, indeed, all of our police officers who keep us safe each and every day.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Paul Miller: Ontario universities inspire and expand the minds of our young people, helping them realize their potential. They support cutting-edge research and innovation that spur social and economic progress. They strengthen our democracy and support our communities.

The university faculty are at the heart of these institutions. We must ensure that they are supported and treated fairly. Ontarians know this. Some 94% of Ontarians believe that our universities should provide good jobs.

Recently, I met with representatives of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. I was concerned to hear about the challenges faced by Ontario university professors, who, by a wide margin, face the highest student-faculty ratios in Canada. Yet instead of investing in more full-time faculty, our universities are shifting teaching to precariously employed contract instructors. These contract faculty often have no benefits or job security. Some have to reapply every year for their jobs. They are usually paid less than their full-time colleagues.

Do these types of precarious jobs represent the Ontario we want for our children? No, they don't. That is why it is vital for our universities to have the funding they need to invest in full-time, tenure-stream faculty. Ontario needs labour laws that ensure fair employment not just for contract professors, but for all contract workers. This is how we support good jobs and secure the quality of Ontario post-secondary education.

LIBERTY VILLAGE

Mr. Han Dong: Good afternoon, Speaker. Trinity-Spadina is home to some of the fastest-growing neigh-

bourhoods in Canada. As these communities grow, we need to ensure that all Ontarians have access to child care, schools, health care and other crucial services.

I am confident that this government recognizes and is taking action to meet the needs of our downtown communities, communities like Liberty Village.

Liberty Village was historically a manufacturing centre of western Toronto. Today it is home to many millennials who want to live close to work. This brings a need for sufficient social infrastructure, like schools and daycare facilities, so residents can start and grow their families.

The 2017 budget provides hope for that. The province will invest nearly \$16 billion in capital grants over the next 10 years. The funding is intended to help to build new schools in high-growth areas and improve conditions of existing schools.

I also welcome our government's commitment of 100,000 new daycare spaces. Many of those will be in Toronto. This is part of a historic investment of over \$200 million for Ontarians.

I believe these investments will provide relief to neighbourhoods like Liberty Village and will help to transform it into a true live-and-work community.

1310

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: For decades, parents and older generations have lamented that younger generations don't have enough financial literacy to thrive in our fast-paced society. That is no longer the case. Today's youth and millennials pay more attention to budgets and financial planning than most short-sighted governments that are willing to spend money they don't have in order to win votes.

Younger generations are more financially literate than ever before, but that doesn't mean they are going to be able to thrive. It is hard to get ahead when their personal share of the provincial debt stands at more than \$22,000 per person. They are also burdened with an additional \$34,000 in national debt, certain to reach even more astronomical heights since the federal government is not projected to deliver a balanced budget until 2050. At this rate, it isn't just children and grandchildren who will be paying for profligate spending. The great-great-great-grandchildren of millennials will be saddled with repayment.

A national non-partisan organization called Generation Screwed is promoting the truth that younger generations will pay the price tomorrow for the fiscal irresponsibility of today. They show that young people across the province and nation recognize the burden that is being put on them. They are waking up to this and other governments' reckless fiscal decisions.

The Premier is fond of referencing the impact of this government's decisions on her grandchildren. I wonder if she'll tell them that the impact includes debt increases of

\$33 million a day. Our current government should take a lesson from the financial literacy of our youth before the youth of today suffer the hangover from this government's party.

PAGES DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

M^{me} Gila Martow: Mes chers amis, le programme des pages permet aux étudiants de septième et huitième années qui ont de bons résultats académiques d'avoir l'occasion de passer du temps à Queen's Park dans un programme où ils peuvent rencontrer des parlementaires et des personnalités politiques, tout en apprenant comment fonctionne la législature et l'histoire de notre grande province et du système parlementaire.

Les étudiants sont excusés de leur école alors qu'ils servent de page et reçoivent \$15 par jour et de l'argent pour le transport vers et depuis Queen's Park et leur résidence dans la région de Toronto. La durée du terme varie en fonction des circonstances et dure généralement de deux à quatre semaines.

Devenir page est un grand honneur, et c'est très compétitif.

Les pages provenant de l'extérieur de la ville habitent généralement avec des membres de leur famille ou avec des amis dans la région de Toronto pendant leur mandat. Ceux qui sont acceptés dans le programme seront invités à déjeuner avec le député représentant leur circonscription.

Je vous encourage à obtenir plus d'informations en ligne sur ce programme et à vous porter candidat à ce programme passionnant et unique.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup—et le Président. They have lunch with me, too.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor—Tecumseh on a point of order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. With your indulgence, I'd like to welcome a special guest to the Legislature this afternoon: the mayor of Windsor, Drew Dilkens. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'm not sure who that guy is that he's sitting next to.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's illegal. Thank you for all of the members' statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MERCHANT NAVY VETERANS DAY ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE JOUR DES ANCIENS COMBATTANTS DE LA MARINE MARCHANDE

Mr. Wilson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to proclaim Merchant Navy Veterans Day / Projet de loi 130, Loi proclamant le Jour des anciens combattants de la marine marchande.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jim Wilson: The bill proclaims September 3 in each year as Merchant Navy Veterans Day.

With this legislation, I'm asking members of this House to recognize the efforts of the merchant navy veterans who, throughout the various conflicts in which Canada has participated and the thousands of lives that have been lost, served to ensure our democracy not only in this country, but all around the world.

I would like to recognize Mr. Stéphane Ouellette, president and CEO of the Merchant Navy Commemorative Theme Project, for taking the initiative to promote the significance of September 3 all across Canada.

PETITIONS

GRANDVIEW CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Grandview Children's Centre is Durham region's only outpatient rehabilitation facility for children and youth with special needs; and

“Whereas Grandview Children's Centre's main facility was originally constructed in 1983 to serve 400 children and now has a demand of over 8,000 children annually; and

“Whereas growth has resulted in the need for lease locations leading to inefficient and fragmented care delivery; and

“Whereas it is crucial for Grandview Children's Centre to complete a major development project to construct a new facility in order to meet the existing as well as future needs of Durham region's children, youth and families; and

“Whereas in 2009 Grandview Children's Centre submitted a capital development plan to the province to construct a new facility; and

“Whereas in 2016 the town of Ajax donated a parcel of land on which to build the new Grandview; and

“Whereas the Grandview foundation has raised over \$8 million; and

“Whereas since 2009 the need for services has continued to increase, with over 2,753 children, youth and families currently on the wait-list for services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario prioritizes, commits to and approves Grandview Children's Centre's capital de-

velopment plan so that the chronic shortage of facilities in Durham can be alleviated."

Of course, I agree and I'm affixing my signature.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

"Whereas Belle River's privately operated ServiceOntario centre shut down in January 2017 because the second owner in four years has given up operating it; and

"Whereas the government is considering applications to let yet another private owner take over the operation of the centre; and

"Whereas the people of Belle River and surrounding communities have a right to reliable business hours; and

"Whereas the people of Belle River and surrounding communities have a right—where they live—to the full range of services available only at publicly operated centres, in addition to health cards and driver's licences, such as:

- “—registering a business;
- “—filing Employment Standards Act claims;
- “—submitting Landlord Tenant Board documents;
- “—entering Ministry of Natural Resources draws;...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services instruct ServiceOntario to immediately and permanently open and staff a public ServiceOntario centre in Belle River."

I agree with the petition, will affix my name and send it to the Clerks' table via page Gracin.

ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas elevators are an important amenity for a resident of a high-rise residential building; and

"Whereas ensuring basic mobility and standards of living for residents remain top priority; and

"Whereas the unreasonable delay of repairs for elevator services across Ontario is a concern for all residents of high-rise buildings who experience constant breakdowns, mechanical failures and 'out of service' notices for unspecified amounts of time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Urge the Ontario government to require repairs to elevators be completed within a reasonable and prescribed time frame. We urge this government to address these concerns that are shared by residents of Trinity-Spadina and across Ontario."

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my name and give it to page Jeremi.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas under the current Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG), one in eight Ontario schools is at risk of closure; and

"Whereas the value of a school to the local economy and community has been removed from the PARG; and

"Whereas the PARG outlines consultation requirements that are insufficient to allow for meaningful community involvement, including the establishment of community hubs; and

"Whereas school closures have a significant negative impact on families and their children, resulting in inequitable access to extracurricular activities and other essential school involvement, and after-school work opportunities; and

"Whereas school closures have devastating impacts on the growth and overall viability of communities across Ontario, in particular self-sustaining agricultural communities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To place a moratorium on all school closures across Ontario and to suspend all pupil accommodation reviews until the PARG has been subject to a substantive review by an all-party committee that will examine the effects of extensive school closures on the health of our communities and children."

I fully support this. I affix my name and send it with page Sofia.

1320

SECURITY GUARDS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further petitions? I recognize the member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see you this afternoon.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario security guards are taking on more responsibility to meet the needs of the public;

"Whereas Ontario security guards are paying more for licensing, testing and training to fulfill their duties;

"Whereas Ontario security guards are going through more rigorous testing and training to ensure they are reliable for their duties to their employer and the public;

"Whereas the ever-growing need for public and private safety and security is of utmost importance, the need for well-trained and valuable personnel is on the rise in an ever-growing industry;

"Whereas most security guards make minimum wage, we believe that they deserve more for what they do to keep us safe and secure every day of the year;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that all provincially licensed security guards make a minimum wage of no less than \$15 an hour."

Speaker, I fully agree. I'll sign this and give it to Matthew to bring up to the Clerks' desk.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Han Dong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity prices have increased and in too many cases become unaffordable for Ontarians;

"Whereas Ontario is a prosperous province and people should never have to choose between hydro and other daily necessities;

"Whereas people want to know that hydro rate relief is on the way; that relief will go to everyone; and that relief will be lasting because it is built on significant change;

"Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would reduce hydro bills for residential consumers, small businesses and farms by an average of 25% as part of a significant system restructuring, with increases held to the rate of inflation for the next four years;

"Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would provide people with low incomes and those living in rural communities with even greater reductions to their electricity bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the Ontario fair hydro plan and provide relief for Ontario electricity consumers as quickly as possible;

"Continue working to ensure clean, reliable and affordable electricity is available for all Ontarians."

I agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Jeremi.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have an electricity petition sent in by the Centre Street Family Dental clinic in Huntsville. It states:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current government took office; and

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

I've signed this. I support it, and I'll give it to Matt to take to the table.

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

M. Taras Natyshak: J'ai le plaisir d'introduire une autre pétition : « Privatiser Hydro One : une autre mauvaise décision.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que la privatisation d'Hydro One est un aller sans retour; et

« Attendu que nous allons perdre des centaines de millions de revenus fiables d'Hydro One pour nos écoles et nos hôpitaux; et

« Attendu que nous allons perdre des centaines de millions de revenus fiables d'Hydro One pour nos écoles et nos hôpitaux; et

« Attendu que nous allons perdre le plus gros atout économique provincial et le contrôle de notre avenir dans le secteur de l'énergie; et

« Attendu que nous allons payer de plus en plus pour l'électricité, tout comme ce qui est arrivé ailleurs;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit :

« D'arrêter la vente d'Hydro One et de faire en sorte que les familles de l'Ontario, comme propriétaires d'Hydro One, en bénéficient, maintenant et pour les générations à venir. »

Je suis en accord et en appui. Je vais y affixer ma signature et l'envoyer chez vous avec page Rada. Merci.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly sent to me by a number of individuals in Markham, Scarborough, Ajax and Toronto. It's entitled, "Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas community water fluoridation is a safe, effective and scientifically proven means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas recent experience in such Canadian cities as Dorval, Calgary and Windsor that have removed fluoride from drinking water has shown a dramatic increase in dental decay; and

“Whereas the continued use of fluoride in community drinking water is at risk in Ontario cities representing more than 10% of Ontario’s population, including the region of Peel; and

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature has twice voted unanimously in favour of the benefits of community water fluoridation, and the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing urge support for amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and other applicable legislation to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory and to remove provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to introduce legislation amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and make changes to other applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition, and send it down with page Matthew.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space as it was built for a mere 7,000” emergency room “visits per year and now experiences” almost 40,000 ER visits per year; and

“Whereas the government-implemented Places to Grow Act forecasts massive population growth in New Tecumseth, which along with the aging population will only intensify the need for the redevelopment of the hospital; and

“Whereas all other hospital emergency facilities are more than 45 minutes away with no public transit available between those communities; and

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government immediately provide the necessary funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital for the redevelopment of their emergency department, operating rooms, diagnostic imaging and laboratory to ensure that they can continue to provide stable and ongoing service to residents in our area.”

I certainly agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I’ve edited this petition in the interest of saving time.

“Protect Ojibway Prairie.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ojibway Prairie Complex is” within a system of five parks totalling more than 330 hectares, which is half of the remaining natural areas in the city of Windsor; and

“Whereas Ojibway has 160 species at risk” and is Canada’s most “endangered ecosystem;

“Whereas over 4,000 species live on the site,” represented by more than 100 rare plants, more than 230 bird species and 16 mammals; and

“Whereas” there is a “proposed development” adjacent to the complex; and

“Whereas” some of the areas within the Ojibway Prairie Complex include “environmentally significant areas … a provincially significant wetland … and an area of natural and scientific interest...;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To designate this land with provincial importance and prevent any development on or adjacent to this” property.

I fully agree. I’ll sign it and send it up with Matt to the desk.

1330

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

“Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

“Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge.”

I support this petition, affix my signature, and hand it to page Katie.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**LIQUOR STATUTE AMENDMENT ACT
(SALE OF SPIRITS MANUFACTURED
FOR BRAND OWNERS), 2017**

**LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS CONCERNANT L'ALCOOL
(VENTE DE SPIRITUEUX FABRIQUÉS
POUR DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE MARQUE)**

Mr. Hatfield moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act and the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, 1996 with respect to authorizations for brand owners to sell spirits manufactured for them in Ontario / Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools et la Loi de 1996 sur la réglementation des alcools et des jeux et la protection du public en ce qui concerne les autorisations permettant aux propriétaires de marque de vendre des spiritueux fabriqués pour eux en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: This bill could very well be the most important piece of legislation to my community that I will ever have the occasion to put forward, and that is no exaggeration. You could say that this is our mayday distress call.

I want to welcome again the mayor of Windsor, Drew Dilkens, to the chamber this afternoon. He is here in support of this bill.

We have, in Windsor, on Riverside Drive in Old Walkerville, right along the shores of the Detroit River, not far from the train station, one of the most beautiful buildings in southwestern Ontario—indeed, I would argue one of the most beautiful buildings in North America. It was built by Hiram Walker. It served as the distiller's head office and, until the end of March, was the Canadian Club brand heritage centre.

Canadian Club, as you know, Speaker, is a whisky enjoyed around the world. Its origins are in Windsor. It is still produced there pretty well every day, as it has been for almost 160 years.

However, the CC brand heritage centre was closed to the public at the end of March. There were several reasons for that, and one of them is because of Ontario's regulations regarding the sale of spirits at distilling sites—more on that in a moment.

Let me first tell you more about the building, the Canadian Club brand heritage centre. Some 15,000 people a year have been touring this magnificent facility and hearing stories of Windsor's colourful history. Hiram Walker started making whisky in Windsor back in the 1850s. As he prospered, he built this magnificent head

office building. The brand heritage centre has graced our community for 125 years.

I'll read from an Anne Jarvis column in the Windsor Star this past February:

"It's a building modelled on a 16th-century Florentine palace and a testament to a man who founded part of this city. The Canadian Club Brand Centre, the magnificent former flagship of Hiram Walker's astonishing empire, may be operated by multinational corporation Beam Suntory, but its rich heritage belongs to Windsor."

In that story, Anne Jarvis said, "It's unconscionable for the company to announce it will close the centre, suggesting this heritage isn't important. It's important to us.

"Modelled on the Palazzo Pandolfini, the head offices of Walker—the distillery and business magnate and founder of Walkerville—are jaw-dropping.

"One of North America's finest examples of 16th-century Italian Renaissance architecture from Florence, the building on Riverside Drive also copies parts of other grand palaces in Europe. The capitals on the columns are from the Zorzi Palace in Venice and lamps on the entrance are from the Strozzi Palace in Florence.

"There's a decorative terra cotta frieze across the red brick exterior, ornate brass gates at the entrance and an elegant portico overlooking the manicured gardens along the Detroit River at the back. The inside is full of Egyptian marble, Mexican onyx, and sumptuous oak, mahogany and walnut." Speaker, I could go on and on reading from Anne's story, but just let me tell the assembly that the building is full, absolutely full, of millions of dollars of art and artifacts. The walls in the art gallery are lined with the works of the Group of Seven. There's an old speakeasy in the basement with bullet holes in the brick walls. Al Capone was one of the frequent visitors back in the Prohibition days. He was a regular customer, as was Joe Kennedy, the father of American President John F. Kennedy and senators Robert and Ted. Kennedy made his fortune during the Prohibition years.

Speaker, the city of Windsor has commissioned a statue of Hiram Walker as we prepare to celebrate our 125th birthday this year. That's because Hiram Walker was a true founder of our community. I have to tell you, Speaker, we were gobsmacked when we learned this building was to close. The owners of the Canadian Club brand of whisky see no real advantage to keep paying for its upkeep. In their other brand centres around the world, they show people how the liquor is made and they offer samples for sale. That's part of the whole visitor experience. I get that. But what the American Japanese owners of the brand don't seem to get is the tremendous value the building has to the history of Windsor and Essex county.

Hiram Walker was a visionary. He built brick homes for his workers and offered them at reduced rates; he paved the roads; he paid for the street lights and sidewalks. He made sure there were schools and he funded a hospital. He set up a fire department and a police department. His town was and is known as Walkerville. Walker

Road is one of our main thoroughfares. The Canadian Club brand heritage centre helps us tell that story. It's the crown jewel in our distillery district.

Tourism is big business in our area. Windsor is Ontario's front door to many American visitors. Our farming families in the county provide the grains for the whisky, and they have done that since the 1850s. This brings us to the problem. Regulations in Ontario allow those who manufacture distilled spirits to sell their products where they're distilled, but the owners of the Hiram Walker distillery sold their Canadian Club brand of whisky to Beam Suntory, an international company. Hiram Walker still manufactures the CC brand of whisky in the same place, but it is now done under contract for Beam Suntory.

This technicality means that despite Canadian Club's success and Hiram Walker's contribution to the history of Windsor and Essex county, Canadian Club whisky cannot be sold at the Canadian Club brand heritage centre, because it's bottled under contract. Distilled and bottled in the same way in the same place, but now under contract, as opposed to by the owner of the brand.

This bill has no application any place else in Ontario. There is no other distillery in the same circumstance with a brand centre within 500 metres as specified in this bill. It is strictly a made-in-Windsor solution to a Windsor-only issue. The bill, in simple terms, allows for the sale of contracted whisky at that brand's heritage centre as long as it is within 500 metres of the site where it is manufactured.

How simple is that? On paper, that's all this bill is about, but for our city's history, for our tourism, for our community, this bill is about so much more. That's why I'm asking you today for your support. This initiative is being driven by the mayor of Windsor, Drew Dilkens, who came to Queen's Park today.

Windsor is known as the automotive capital of Canada, but we are also the home of Canadian Club whisky. We have the Canadian Club brand heritage centre to prove it. We don't want to lose that connection to our past. The mayor is working with the brand owners on a number of different fronts as part of the coordinated campaign to save the building for public access, to give it new life, to make it more acceptable for them to keep it open to the public. It's a total community effort. This bill is just one piece of the overall puzzle.

1340

But as you can see in the letter from the company chair and CEO that I provided to all the members late last week, it's an essential piece of that puzzle. Matt Shattock from Beam Suntory writes, "The city of Windsor has already made meaningful proposals to support a future for the heritage centre. We appreciate your personal leadership and hope the province of Ontario will also do its part to promote a favourable outcome for this iconic part of Windsor's heritage. Without this change, I am advised that the economics would be unlikely to justify re-opening the centre." And that, Speaker, would be devastating to Windsor and Essex county.

I remember the Premier's words when she was interviewed just after the last provincial election. The Liberals lost their one seat down our way, and one of the reporters asked, "Does this mean you'll forget about Windsor?" The Premier's answer was, "No, I'll not forget about Windsor." I for one don't think she has, I for one don't think she will, and I believe the Premier sees the merit in this bill: the importance of this bill to our mayor, our warden, our community, our tourism, our past and our future.

This isn't rocket science, Speaker. This isn't opening the floodgates to expansion of alcohol sales in Ontario. This isn't expansion of alcohol sales by stealth. The regulatory change can't be used anywhere else in Ontario. My friends at OPSEU, with members at the LCBO outlet, see the value in this bill. They're not troubled by it. We shouldn't be troubled by it either.

Look, if the wording in the bill needs improving, then take it to committee and fashion a better bill. If the government has a better idea, bring it on; make it happen. But my community needs this to pass into law, and we need it done quickly. We have to show Chicago, Kentucky, Japan and Beam Suntory that Ontario is open for business, that Ontario's political leaders can recognize a business problem and solve it.

Speaker, visitors to a distillery want to see the vats, smell the whisky as it's being prepared, hear the machinery, the clinking of the bottles as they come down the line. They want to be told the history of the product, the tales of Prohibition and the bootleggers. They want to sample the whisky, taste it at its various ages and stages, and some of them—not all, but some—would like the opportunity to buy some to take it home with them. That's the total visitor experience. That's what we get from our wonderful wineries in Ontario.

Some of Ontario's rules and regulations for distillers were written way back in the last century. They were adopted for good reasons, but that doesn't mean they're not outdated and can't be changed and updated, especially if it is to benefit the economy, to grow our tourism, to preserve our heritage, to celebrate our history—and that's all that this bill does.

Together, let's make it work. Let's pass this bill, get it to committee, finesse it and bring it back for final passage as quickly as possible. Together, let's show the American and Japanese owners that we value their contributions to our economy. Let's partner with them in preserving such an important element of Ontario's history, of Windsor's heritage, of Canadian whisky: our very own Canadian Club.

Speaker, I urge everybody to support this bill. This is a huge issue in my community. Obviously, that's evidenced by the mayor, Drew Dilkens, coming here this afternoon for the debate on this bill. This bill can be solved in a matter of days if the majority Liberals would take this to committee, do the hearings and bring it back for third reading before we break in June.

Thank you for your time this afternoon, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Chair. You look lovely today.

I'd like to thank the member from Windsor-Tecumseh for raising this issue and for introducing the bill, and very much thank His Honour for being here today. We're very glad to have you here.

We understand that this is a very important issue to the community of Windsor and to the member, and we appreciate his efforts to find solutions to the challenges that the company is having with keeping the centre open. My aunt lived there for many years and constantly talked about Hiram Walker and the distillery. She always told us wonderful stories about Windsor. She loved her community dearly.

Ontario has a strong beverage alcohol manufacturing sector that brings jobs and economic growth to communities across the province, and this government has been a strong supporter of local producers. We commend the member for proposing this idea to support the Canadian Club owners and the community to keep the centre open, but it's important that we ensure that this proposed legislation doesn't create unintended consequences.

I'm concerned that this bill could allow for the opening of many new private liquor stores in the province, which is at odds with my personal socially responsible approach to alcohol retail, and also to our government's. It may also come with serious free trade implications as well.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Wine and beer.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm not saying I'm against it, but I do believe it will be very important to examine the bill more closely in committee—I do support this bill—and ensure that the solution does not jeopardize social responsibility or infringe on our free trade responsibilities regarding alcohol sales.

I thank the member for his advocacy and this proposal, and look forward to this bill being further reviewed through the committee process.

I know that this bill proposes to amend the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act to revise the definition of a distillery retail store to also include a store in Ontario owned and operated by a person who contracts with a manufacturer to manufacture spirits in Ontario under a brand that the person owns, from which the person is authorized under clause 3(1)(e.0.1) of the Liquor Control Act to sell spirits to purchasers. It also proposes to amend the Liquor Control Act to add a clause authorizing persons that contract with a manufacturer to manufacture spirits in Ontario under a brand the person owns to operate a store for the sale of those spirits to the public if the store is located within 500 metres of the manufacturer's manufacturing premises.

I know how important this is to the community, and I agree that this would bring much-needed revenue and tourism to Windsor. I hope that, through the committee process, we will be able to accomplish what the member from Windsor-Tecumseh and the mayor would like to happen. It's a beautiful building, and it should be an attraction to people not only from Ontario but from

across the river in Detroit as well. I hope that other people will support this bill and give Windsor a chance to perhaps get this centre reopened.

The Canadian Club heritage centre is a brand experience and visitors' centre located next to a major distillery facility in downtown Windsor, hosting 15,000 visitors annually, as well as private functions. That would be a terrible loss if it were to remain closed. The heritage centre is housed in the historic private offices of Hiram Walker, who founded the original distillery and created Canadian Club. All of my relatives who drink rye whisky love Canadian Club, and US relatives always asked us to try to smuggle some across the border. They loved it best as well.

In February, the company that owns the Canadian Club brand and operates the heritage centre announced its closure at the end of the year and stopped public tours in March. Both the heritage centre property and the distillery are in fact owned by a competitor company who lease the heritage centre property to Beam Suntory, as well as producing Canadian Club products at their distillery through a licensing agreement with Beam Suntory.

I agree with this bill, and I hope that we are able to satisfactorily resolve this issue through the committee process.

1350

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour to be able to rise in this House and represent the fine constituents of Niagara West-Glanbrook and speak to the member for Windsor-Tecumseh's bill put forward today, Bill 116, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act and the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, 1996 with respect to authorizations for brand owners to sell spirits manufactured for them in Ontario. I wish to thank the honourable member for his great speech a few minutes ago and the member from Barrie for her fine speech just now. Also, I wish to thank His Worship for being here.

I have in front of me a photo of the building that is being discussed, the building that has been talked about, and I would have to agree with the member from Windsor-Tecumseh's assessment of this building: that it is, indeed, one of the most historical and beautiful buildings in southwestern Ontario. I think if you have the opportunity to see a picture of it or tour it, if you get that chance, it's indeed a building that's worth preserving and a building that's worth celebrating. I'm excited to vote in favour of this act if it will have that good intent of preserving a piece of architectural legacy, a piece of Ontario's legacy.

On that note, Madam Speaker, I don't wish to go off topic, but just a couple of hours ago, I had the chance to meet with some of the veterans as we had a lunch celebrating the merchant navy, and we had a discussion about history and the importance of history. We like to talk, perhaps, in this House a lot about the history of ideas and the history of institutions. I think the history of archi-

ture is also something that should be celebrated more often in this House. We have so many beautiful heritage buildings in Ontario. As we move quickly into the 21st century, we have to ensure that these buildings—some of which come from the 19th century or earlier, or perhaps the beginning of the 20th century—that possess a unique snapshot of life as it was and that possess, really, a spirit of Canada's origins and Ontario's roots, that we celebrate them and do our best to make sure that this history is a living history, that this history is one that people can go visit and that people can celebrate.

From that perspective, I commend the member for bringing forward this piece of legislation to safeguard what is obviously a landmark in his community, what is obviously very important to the people of Windsor. I do hope that the Premier and her government will follow through on the commitment they made following the last election to ensure that Windsor's voice is heard.

One of the other subjects I do want to briefly touch upon with relevance to this bill is that, when we speak about distilleries and when we speak about whisky—and I know, coming from me, it seems a bit ironic that I speak about the consumption of alcohol. Of course, I haven't had much experience in that realm of human experience, but I look forward to learning a little more about the process and perhaps indulging a little more over the years—not too much, of course.

The reality is that I had the opportunity last December to tour a local distillery in my riding. I had the opportunity to visit Geoff Dillon's distillery along the QEW in Vineland, right between Beamsville and Vineland, where they produce incredible spirits, and where they're working on a very nice Canadian whisky that they produce. In that discussion that I had with him, Geoff really brought forward the importance of ensuring that we don't have an overly bureaucratic and overly regulated industry, to the extent that it hurts the industry, to the extent that it chokes business and that it leads to the demise of companies that are demonstrably contributing to a local culture—in this case, the local economy—and really helping to benefit those in the surrounding regions.

I know the member from Niagara Falls will be able to testify to, in his riding as well, the rich abundance of wineries that we have in the Niagara region. I think distilleries really do have the opportunity to become a thriving business and to really be a landmark here in Ontario, where people come to Ontario, as they come to Niagara now, to celebrate Canadian whisky and to celebrate Ontario rye.

I also want to note that this government, unfortunately, voted against—and I'm very disappointed by this. They did vote against the member for Leeds-Grenville. They voted against his speech a couple of months ago which would have made it easier for craft distillers here in the province of Ontario to get their product to market, to ensure that they were making a profit in a way that was able to sustain their industry and able to contribute to the local economy and to the local culture and society in the areas in which those craft distilleries are.

I found it kind of ironic to go back and read from the member from Windsor-Tecumseh's speech regarding that piece of legislation, where he said, "This bill, according to some critics, is yet another attempt by the Conservatives to privatize public services by stealth."

I'm unsure how the member came to that conclusion, but it was fascinating to also hear a bit of camaraderie, perhaps, going on between the member from Barrie and the member from Tecumseh, and her words about perhaps the trend towards privatization or the infringement of trade agreements. I would have to disagree, but I do think it's interesting to see the member from Windsor-Tecumseh now realizing that it is necessary to ensure that we remove overly burdensome regulations on the industry so that we can in fact move this industry forward.

I know this is just specific to this one situation; it's just specific to this one location. But I do think there's a lesson here that perhaps we should consider, that there is an opportunity in Ontario to help our craft distillers in a very real and meaningful way. I'm pleased that the member from Leeds-Grenville brought forward his motion in the past, but I do want to return to the bill at hand and thank the member from Windsor-Tecumseh for his strong defence of his community, his strong voice for the city of Windsor, and his obvious passion for history, his obvious passion for the architectural beauty that this bill will help protect. So I want to thank him for his words.

I want to thank all members for speaking to this, and I look forward to hearing other members as they contribute to debate on this private member's bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the bill brought forward by my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh. Our ridings often, for many people, intermingle. Though we have boundaries, many people think that his riding is my riding and my riding is his riding. The same happens with my colleague from Essex. What that means is that the people from Windsor and Essex county all have very, very close ties to each other. Part of that is the history of our area. The Canadian Club heritage brand centre is a very large piece of the history of our area. I know the Liberal member from Barrie stood up and talked about having some concerns about the expansion of something like this. This bill specifically addresses only the Canadian Club heritage brand centre in the riding of Windsor-Tecumseh. It is specifically to allow them to be able to sell a brand that they produce. It is not for anywhere else in the province, so you can rest assured that that's not going to be an issue, because we're talking specifically about one location.

I think the member from Windsor-Tecumseh actually did a very good job, in his time speaking to the bill, explaining exactly what the bill means, where it will be in effect, and what that means for our community. Because he did such a great job of going into the history, and I don't have as much time as he does—my colleague from Essex wants to lend his thoughts to the bill as well,

and so do some of my other colleagues—I won't get too much into the history of the brand centre. The member from Barrie touched on what a beautiful building it is, and it is a beautiful building. Hopefully this bill will pass, they'll be able to open the building again, and everybody in this chamber can come and enjoy the building.

But it's so much more than just the building: It's the history of our city. It's the people who have been married there. I had the pleasure, before I was elected—I was a lay chaplain, a licensed wedding officiant. I couldn't tell you how many weddings I actually performed outside, on the back grounds of this brand centre, as you watch the boats go by and the water in the background. What a beautiful location it is for those types of celebrations, and how special this place is to those who have been married there. There have been generations where there have been grandparents, parents and children, and hopefully, through this bill, there will be grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will have the ability to be married on this property.

1400

I have had a tour. With the tour we had a good big group of people. We did a tour and the fellow who took us through talked about the history of the building. He talked about the basement room where Al Capone had been, and he showed us the bullet holes. You can actually touch the bullet holes in the wall. It's interesting because it depends on who you're talking to and how they tell the story, which side of the gun Al Capone was on. I'm not sure anybody really knows what side of the gun he was on, but everybody is certain that he was in the basement of that building, and you can see the bullet holes in the wall.

The member from Windsor—Tecumseh talked about Hiram Walker and his importance to the area, how he had vision and how he had hope for our area, what an incredible business owner and employer he was, how he made sure his employees had affordable housing, how he built our city up, built schools and so many other things and how he actually played a very large role in building Windsor and making it what it is today.

The fact that we have a portion of Windsor that is actually called Walkerville and named for him I think speaks volumes to the contribution of Hiram Walker and, more specifically, to the building he did his business in, that he actually worked in and used to help build our community up and make it what it is today.

I don't think we can stress enough the importance of this building and its history, the heritage of this building to our community. Many celebrations take place there. There's so much history in that building and in the stories that have come out of that building and the memories from that building. As the member from Windsor—Tecumseh had pointed out, I think because our mayor, Drew Dilkens, has come today, it just drives that point home, how important this is to our city. The mayor has travelled a great distance, not just to come here, but he has crossed the border in order to fight to keep this building open. You will now have three members from

the area talking about how significant and how important this building is to our area, but again not just the building itself but the history that it brings to our community and what it still continues to give to our community.

In order to preserve that heritage, this bill has to pass. We have to have it so that the Canadian Club heritage brand centre reopens and they have the ability to sell their product. I think anybody in this House should recognize that when you have the union that represents employees at the LCBO saying they support this bill, they support the idea of allowing this one facility to sell the product that they distill, that's huge. If they had any concerns about this spreading across the province, if they had any concerns about what this means to their employees and potential loss of their employees, they would not have supported it. Their president has come out in full support of this bill, and I'm asking that the government side do the same and do it quickly. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I believe, as the member from Barrie has said and said very eloquently, the government would very much like to explore the proposal made by the member in this particular private member's bill, Bill 116, and discuss this at committee. Certainly I would also like to extend my greetings and welcome to His Worship as well and thank him for coming in.

I think this talks to a challenge facing many of our communities today as we look backward on some of the things that sustained our communities in the era in which we grew up. As time continues to evolve, we watch the nature of some of the activities that our forebears performed change today, and yet we recognize that there's a part of our identity and a part of our history that remains in the fixtures where that business once took place. I grasp that, and I think it's a very healthy move for the Windsor-Essex area, which is certainly one of my favourite areas in the province, to sit down and to say, "Let us find something to preserve, to protect, to celebrate, and a base on which to build a 21st-century industry," that being tourism, hospitality and allied businesses, predicated on the foundation that was built as the communities evolved.

In this respect, I think the member for Barrie has certainly covered the points that the government wished to raise.

I'd also like to say that Mr. Hatfield has a very good reputation in this House for a very thoughtful and moderate approach to the things that he is personally very passionate about. It has been my pleasure to have worked with him on a few things on which we share much the same preference.

I'm looking forward to supporting this and getting it to committee. Hopefully, this is one area in which, as MPPs, we can sit down within committee and say, "Okay, let us see how we can make this proposal work," not just in this one instance, but to produce something that minimizes, if not eliminates, any unintended conse-

quences—which the member from Barrie elaborated on a little earlier—and which also may provide a template for taking something similar and being able to extend it in a similar fashion as time moves forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of Bill 116, the Liquor Statute Amendment Act.

I commend my friend Percy Hatfield, the member for Windsor-Tecumseh, for his due diligence in bringing this bill forward to save the historic Canadian Club brand heritage centre site from closure. I think this bill is demonstrative of his good constituency work and the solid representation that he gives to the people back home, his constituents.

This bill does two things: One, it corrects a technicality in the law, or bureaucratic red tape, through amendments to the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act and the Liquor Control Act that would allow the Canadian Club brand of whisky to be sold on-site at the historic brand centre in Walkerville, the same place where it has been made for the past 160 years. Two, it helps keep the doors open on one of the most historical and beautiful buildings in southwestern Ontario, the Canadian Club brand heritage centre.

I think this is a creative move to help convince the new owners of that historic facility to reverse their decision to close. After all, the building is a major tourist attraction, visited by some 15,000 people a year, according to the Windsor Essex tourism office.

Currently, the law allows a manufacturer of alcohol to sell its own product on-site but not another brand. While this applies to every manufacturer of beer, wine or spirits who can obtain a permit to sell what they make on-site to the public, it does not apply to the manufacturer of Canadian Club whisky, otherwise known as CC.

The legal quagmire arose after Hiram Walker, the original producer, sold the rights to another distiller to make Canadian Club.

In the spirit of full disclosure and no conflict of interest, Madam Speaker, I am not a descendant of Hiram Walker, although I am trying to find a link to the lineage.

It is this subcontracting to another manufacturer that prevents them from selling their whisky from the CC brand heritage centre in Windsor. As a result, the manufacturer has closed the building to the public. The last public tour was on March 31. But they said that if they're allowed to sell bottles of Canadian Club to tourists and other visitors who come to the heritage brand centre, then they would keep it open.

The changes proposed in Bill 116 would allow a person who contracts with a manufacturer to manufacturer spirits to sell from a store located within 500 metres from the manufacturer's manufacturing premises, remedying the situation.

I think this change is vital. These stores are vital to successfully operating a visitors' centre to promote products and brands, especially for the Canadian Club brand heritage centre, which annually welcomes thousands of visitors.

Whisky production contributes some \$1.5 billion to Ontario's gross provincial product, so they're an important stakeholder for our farmers, according to Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The industry operates significant distilleries in Ontario, sustaining over 6,000 full-time jobs, including those at Hiram Walker and Sons Ltd. in Windsor, the largest operating distillery in North America.

Speaking with a friend from Spirits Canada, Jan Westcott, I know the huge impact on our agricultural community, our manufacturing sector and our economy. I think this is yet one more example of how we can continue to do that.

I think it's important to note that Ontario's distillers fully source 100% of their grain needs from Ontario farmers. We're talking about 200,000 to 225,000 metric tonnes that they buy every year from Ontario farmers, which helps to sustain our rural and agricultural communities. Ontario's distillers annually export approximately \$500 million in finished products to other countries and to other Canadian provinces.

1410

I understand that the change has the support of the company and the community, including the mayor of Windsor, Drew Dilkens—and I welcome His Worship, who's in our members' gallery, and I'm so pleased to add my support to it as well.

This is an opportunity, I believe, for regulations to actually work to keep people working, which is what we're all here to do, to ensure our economy continues to find ways to put people to work and keep them working.

The member from Barrie mentioned unintended consequences. Madam Speaker, I want to just remind her of the unintended consequences of the school closures and the sale of Hydro One that they continue to move forward. Here is one that we can fix very easily. It's red tape; it's bureaucracy. It's going to actually help.

My colleague from Leeds-Grenville brought in the Free My Rye Act, and the Liberals voted against it. Today, Madam Speaker, I'm hoping, in the spirit of our economy, of keeping people working, of removing red tape barriers that are impacting communities such as my colleague's, that we have the ability to make a fundamental change that doesn't take a lot.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Some members probably shouldn't be speaking too much, Madam Speaker, if they have a warning in the House, especially when we're speaking.

At the end of the day, this is a simplistic thing that will keep people—it will be the heritage. Hiram Walker is synonymous with the city of Windsor. He—or his family or his company—built half of Windsor. Here is a potential opportunity to say thank you back to him for the legacy he has meant to that community: to allow people to continue to work.

I applaud my colleague and friend the member from Windsor-Tecumseh on all of his efforts. I hope everyone in this House will do the right thing and vote for this, and

change something that is very simplistic in the eyes of most people in this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's an honour to join the debate today. I want to thank His Worship Mayor Drew Dilkens for joining us today in person. It has been said already that his presence here certainly invokes the importance of this bill to our region. Rounding out the trifecta of our representation in Windsor—Windsor—Tecumseh, Windsor West and Essex—I want to give maybe a rural flair and a rural perspective of what this facility means to our community.

Speaker, Canadian Club, affectionately known in our area as just simply CC—you walk up to the bar and you say, "I'd like a CC and" whatever you mix it with. Or for those who just enjoy CC straight up, it's "on the rocks." It is some fantastic whisky, Speaker. It is world-class. It's one that is as Canadian as maple syrup. Those are the emotions that it invokes to our regions.

When you get off the train, as many folks do when they come and visit Windsor, you get off at the station at Walker Road. At the foot of Walker Road is the distillery. Oftentimes, when they are distilling, you smell those ripe and rich smells of rye, corn, barley and wheat that come from the ground out of the county—that have sustained farming families for generations, that built wealth, that really created our community and continue to contribute to our community. There's an interconnection between our agriculture sector and the finished product that we all know is important in manufacturing, and certainly in the supply chain of agriculture. We all talk about it in this place, despite our partisan affiliation, in the sense that we need to enhance our food production with value-added production. Here's where it works the best: right here.

The missing link—and, Speaker, I believe that the gap in this regulation was simply that: It was an oversight. Those who crafted the regulation I don't think could have ever conceived of this scenario, so we won't fault them for it. But this is a simple way for us to fix it. It gives us an opportunity in this House, one that is rare, to identify a problem, present a very comprehensive and simple solution, and to fix it really quickly. I want to impress upon my colleagues here, who I've heard speak generally positively, which gives me some optimism—I've got to impress upon you the need to expedite this legislation. Why? Because we are on the heels of an enormous tourism season, one that Windsor counts on and one that our region knows is important. We can enhance that by promoting the opening and the continued operation of the brand centre. We will have thousands of folks come and visit us from all around the world. Many of them are looking for exactly this type of culinary or gastronomie tourism, where they can sample some of our local cuisine and other flavours. It has to be a part of that component, Speaker. It's integral to our community. I encourage all folks: Come on down; I'll buy you a glass of whisky, if you'd like. Come down to the Windsor—Walkerville area.

Walkerville is a burgeoning—actually, it's a community that is exploding in its growth and culture and entertainment and diversity, thanks to them wrapping themselves around that shared history. They have embraced the history of the legacy of Hiram Walker and what that meant to that area, and people are coming from all points in the country and around the world to sample it.

Speaker, one thing that I would be remiss if I didn't mention to you in terms of the importance of this building that has been mentioned and the architectural importance and significance of some of the art that is housed within—some of the history in terms of Al Capone being a frequent visitor. My wife and I had our wedding pictures taken on the back steps of the brand centre. They adorn our living room in a wonderful picture with the beautiful arched staircase. Our entire wedding party standing there in the freezing cold of November: November 8. I will not forget that day. November 8 was the day. I would be in serious trouble. On November 8, 2003, we were married. There; I even got that one right. We chose that location because it is synonymous with our region and how passionate and lucky we feel to live in such a wonderful region. It's just simply one of the more beautiful locations to take a picture.

It would be a shame if that was not open to the public and folks weren't able to access it, because generations already have and the intent of this bill is to ensure that generations to come will be able to share in that history.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to debate the bill presented by one of my friends in the Legislature, the member from Windsor—Tecumseh. He has done an outstanding job in advocating for this private member's bill.

Before I begin, I would like to respond to my good colleague from the PC caucus. It's truly amazing how they can tie the Safer School Zones Act, a bill that was presented on the government's side, to this private member's bill discussion. I just want to point out that they've done their work in the committee to present hundreds of amendments. The intent was to try to delay the process of us producing this very much needed Safer School Zones Act. The delay will put our kids, our students, our parents and our teachers at risk of fast-moving traffic. So I encourage the member to spend equal amounts of energy and passion in advocating for the kids and the parents and teachers as we've seen this afternoon here.

I want to commend my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh for his effort to bring forward this bill and for his advocating for his community and this establishment in his community.

I have here a letter. Actually, it's more than a letter; it's a package, presented by him and signed by him, to ask for my support for his private member's bill. He has done extensive work in preparation for this bill. I just took a look at the briefing. For a historic site in his riding, I must say, the people of Windsor—Tecumseh are very fortunate to have a very effective member in this House, defending the best of their interests.

I read through the bill, and it makes me think about my riding of Trinity–Spadina, which houses many, many historic sites. Each alley, each building down on King Street, between University and Bathurst, I can walk by and people can tell me stories about these buildings.

It is our job as members of provincial Parliament to do everything we can to preserve these characteristics of our community, and do everything we can definitely using tools like private member's bills.

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I agree with my colleague from Barrie and her concern. I think that there is some fine detail that we need to work on during the committee process. But here in this House this afternoon, I would like to express my support for this private member's bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I just want to thank the mayor of Windsor for coming. Wouldn't it be nice if this was open and this bill passed soon enough—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I return to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh to wrap up.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you to all my colleagues who spoke this afternoon. Just to assure the member from Barrie, this will not open the doors, not open the floodgates for private liquor stores in Ontario. You have to have a brand centre within 500 metres of where your contracted whisky is distilled.

The member from Windsor West mentioned that Mayor Drew Dilkens had crossed the border. He went to Chicago. We were going to go to Kentucky. He went to Chicago; he could end up going to Japan. That's how much he knows that his community needs this, and he's fighting for this. This bill is a small part of his coordinated effort, a total community effort, to save this building for public use.

My friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: Thank you, sir. I wish you well, if you're checking out your lineage, Mr. Walker, to connect to Mr. Hiram Walker. I wish you well on that task.

The member from Essex talked about the importance to our community, the farming community that has provided the grains to this industry forever. We need our farming community to stay strong and healthy. We need tours of this facility to remind those who come through what an essential part of our economy the farming community is and always was.

Thank you to the member from Trinity–Spadina for your kind words as well.

The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook: Are you old enough to drink yet, Sam? If not, I know it's coming soon. You come down our way, and like the member from Essex said, we'll buy you your first good shot of Canadian Club whisky.

Speaker, I served on city council with the mayor for seven years, and the difference between what we do here and what we do at the municipal level is that if you see a problem, you take it to council, you solve it, and the next

week it's done. What we want for this bill is to get it to committee and get it done. My community needs it.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

Before I call orders of the day, I want to remind the 13 members who have been warned: I have your names on this list.

Orders of the day.

KOREAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE CORÉEN

Mr. Cho moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to proclaim Korean Heritage Month / Projet de loi 123, Loi proclamant le Mois du patrimoine coréen.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: It is with great honour and pride that I rise today to address the House on my private member's bill, Bill 123, Korean Heritage Month Act, 2017. If enacted, this bill would make the month of October Korean Heritage Month.

I'm also honoured to introduce and warmly welcome many good leaders from Korean communities. Among them we have the honourable consul general of the Republic of Korea, Kang Jeong-Sik; Daniel Lee, president of the Korean Canadian Cultural Association; and my good old friend Calvin White, former CEO of the Toronto Zoo. I'm also very happy to announce that my better half, Soon Ok, is joining the excellent group of our leaders. Thank you all for coming.

As the first Korean Canadian elected as a member of provincial Parliament of Ontario, I feel a great sense of duty and privilege to represent the Korean community here in Ontario and of Canada.

I moved to this great country of Canada in 1967 from South Korea. South Korea is the home where I was born and raised, but Canada became my real home by choice. I have lived longer in Canada than in Korea. Toronto is where I got married, established roots and started my family.

By proclaiming the month of October as Korean Heritage Month, the province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Korean Canadians have made to the economic, political, social and cultural fabric of Ontario's society. Korean Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements and contributions of Korean people in the province of Ontario.

October is a historically significant month for the Korean Canadian community. On October 3, the Korean people celebrate National Foundation Day. National Foundation Day celebrates the legendary formation of the

first Korean state of Gojoseon. It is widely believed by the Korean people to be the creation and foundation of the modern Korean state.

I would now like to talk a bit about Korean history, to explain why it is important to have a Korean Heritage Month here in Ontario.

The Korean peninsula has experienced times of independence and foreign occupation throughout its long history. Until 1945, the end of the Second World War, Korea was under foreign influence, and finally arose as independent after the war.

As many of us know, the Second World War was one of the most devastating times in human history. This war left no person or land untouched.

During this time, the Korean people endured hardship and shortages of vital resources, and saw their culture and identity directly threatened due to foreign occupation. There was an attempt to alter Korean culture through cultural genocide: the changing of names, the prohibition of speaking the Korean native tongue in certain public places, and an overall distaste for Korean culture.

Another dark part of history around this time was the issue of comfort women. Comfort women were innocent Korean women and girls used and sexually abused by foreign occupiers during the Second World War.

The end of the Second World War brought a temporary peace to the Korean people as the peninsula was split into two polarized political ideologies by foreign intervention. However, soon after, tensions rose up between the two halves of the Korean peninsula, and the resulting conflict is today known as the Korean War. The Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, and ended in July 1953 with the Korean armistice agreement.

Especially today, I feel thankful to Canada, and the Canadian soldiers who came to the Korean peninsula to defend the people by sacrificing their own lives. Over 26,000 Canadian soldiers, led by the United Nations, served in the Korean War. With my sincere appreciation, I want to thank those Canadian soldiers who fought for the Korean people. Due to their sacrifice and valour, I am able to stand here as a member of provincial Parliament and address the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on my bill, Bill 123, Korean Heritage Month Act, 2017.

During the Second World War, while the Korean people suffered, one foreign missionary who helped the Korean people most was a Canadian missionary by the name of Dr. Frank Schofield. Dr. Schofield was a professor of veterinary science and taught at Guelph university, and was sent to Korea as a missionary by the Canadian Presbyterian head office. Dr. Schofield has been respected nationally by Koreans and has been the only foreign missionary to be buried at the Korean national cemetery.

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The accumulative wars, destruction and deprivation of the Korean people saw many Koreans emigrate from their homeland. Most Korean immigration to Canada occurred after this time.

Canada is home to roughly 250,000 Korean Canadians, most predominantly in Vancouver, British Columbia, and here in Ontario. Ontario is home to about 80,000 Korean Canadians. This number does not take into account the additional thousands of Korean students who come to our great universities and colleges every year as international students, as well as those Koreans who come as temporary foreign workers filling in the gaps of needed skills here in Canada or as Korean investors in Ontario and Canada through direct foreign investments.

The majority of Korean immigrants to Canada came as skilled workers and professionals, mostly doctors, professors, engineers and business owners, ranging from small independently owned family-run stores to larger firms. These skilled and business start-up Korean immigrants added economically to their communities here in Canada. Additionally to economic contributions to Canada, Korean Canadians have added to its cultural fabric. Korean Canadians became involved in their local communities, volunteered and adapted to Canadian culture and way of life.

There have been many outstanding Korean Canadians, ranging from renowned TV and movie actors in the Canadian film industry, to hockey players who made it to the NHL, to professors who are making important scientific breakthroughs. Korean Canadians have added to the diversity of Canada and Ontario.

Ontario is a province of immigrants, and Canada a country of immigrants. Bill 123, Korean Heritage Month Act, 2017, allows us to recognize the importance of respecting those of different backgrounds, this time respecting those of Korean background. It is important to declare October Korean Heritage Month. This would give the province the opportunity to recognize the economic, social and cultural contributions that Korean Canadians made to the development of our province of Ontario and of our great country of Canada.

At this time, Madam Speaker, I'd like to mention that all Canadians of Korean background feel very proud to call themselves Canadians, especially those Koreans who fled prosecution and hardship in North Korea, and I agree with those Koreans who call Ontario and Canada a paradise.

Unfortunately, even today the Korean people are divided on the Korean peninsula. It saddens me to think that so many Korean families, friends and relatives were split due to political ideologies and foreign intervention. Tensions have once again risen within the Korean peninsula, as well as spread from neighbouring countries. Regardless of political ideology, I hope that we can instead focus on the importance of heritage and culture. I hope that by also remembering the acts of different cultures, heritages and pasts, we can show the world that we, here in Ontario, are accepting and respect diversity. I hope that this small act of respecting diversity and multiculturalism will go beyond the political ideologies and demonstrate to other countries the benefits of doing so.

To reiterate: Bill 123, the Korean heritage act, 2017, allows us to recognize the importance of respecting those

of different backgrounds. It is important to teach future generations about different cultures, languages and history. If we do not remember our past, it is difficult to find our way in the future.

I sincerely hope I will receive full support from all my fellow members of provincial Parliament, regardless of political stripes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is absolutely a privilege to rise and to really celebrate this bill that was brought forward by the member from Scarborough–Rouge River. He was a city of Toronto councillor and now of course is a member of provincial Parliament. The city's loss is our gain; there's no question.

On behalf of Andrea Horwath, our leader, and the New Democratic Party of Ontario, I want to welcome also our esteemed visitors here from the Korean community. Welcome to Queen's Park.

There's no question that we will support and celebrate this bill and also, we hope, celebrate October as Korean Heritage Month. You heard very eloquently stated from the member the reasons and a little bit of the background of the Korean people. I just wanted to add my two cents to that.

Many in this House know, but our visitors might not, that I'm a United Church minister by trade. I always say that I'm seconded by God to this secondary profession.

One of the wonderful things about being a United Church minister is the existence of our Korean congregations, and not only our Korean congregations that I had when I was a United Church minister in my own parish, but the many Korean students who came in and studied with me and worked with me. Through them I really had this amazing insight into what it was to be a Korean and what it was to be a Korean expatriate in this country of Canada.

One particular Korean I want to highlight, and that was our moderator, the Very Reverend honourable Sang Chul Lee, who was moderator of the United Church from 1988 to 1990. I want to talk about the Rev. Dr. Sang Chul Lee because of the immense impact he had on me, the United Church and Canada.

He was the first person of Asian descent to serve in a position of that power and that prestige. He was, in fact, the head of the entire United Church. Our moderators served for a two- to three-year term. His term was two years, and he brought a wealth of his own tradition as a Korean to all of Canada. When you think of the United Church, really it's the quintessential Canadian church. It was founded in 1925 by an act of Canadian Parliament—the largest Protestant denomination in Canada still—and here a Korean took the helm of our church.

A little bit about him: He was born in Siberia to Korean parents under Joseph Stalin, and his family moved from Siberia to Japanese-occupied Manchuria. One can only imagine the existence of that family. Their trials and tribulations in itself are a book. He was our 32nd moderator—as I said, the first person of Asian descent and Korean.

His parents were not Christian. His parents were shaman, and he converted from shamanism to Christianity as a result of missionaries in Korea, where they ended up. When Dr. Lee talked about this transition, he would always mention the story of Moses, the story of the exodus of the Jewish people. And he said that very much his family's was a story of exodus, a story to look for the promised land, which he said ultimately he found in Canada—first in Korea; then he came here.

He trained in Korea in a seminary there, in Switzerland and then Canada. He was ordained in 1954.

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Let me tell you a little bit about those two years that he spent as moderator of the United Church. They were the most tumultuous two years in the church's existence. Those were the two years—and I say this very proudly, as the first-ever LGBT critic in this House—in 1988 when the United Church of Canada ordained for the first time openly gay and lesbian people. I can tell you it wasn't easy. About a third of our members left the church. But Dr. Lee stood firm. He was there. He was supportive. He was always a voice for the oppressed, always a voice for the marginalized. In fact, the marriage of his very own daughter was the first interracial marriage that our church had ever witnessed. He performed it, his daughter marrying someone outside of the Korean diaspora.

When he retired as moderator of the United Church, he went on to another prestigious position and became chancellor of Victoria University. Dr. Lee died January 28, 2017, at the age of 92.

Dr. Lee, for me as a young seminary student, was a complete and utter inspiration; for all of the United Church, he was a complete and utter inspiration; and, I would warrant, for all of Canada, he was a complete and utter inspiration. He showed Canada, at a time when it was extremely rare to have someone of Asian, of Korean, descent sit in a position of such power, what it was to be a man of power, what it was to be a man of unbelievable faith, of unbelievable commitment and, of course, of unbelievable service to those who were on the margins and those who were oppressed.

He changed forever our church. You, as Koreans, have changed forever Canada. All I can say on behalf of the New Democratic Party is a very big thank you. Thank you for the honourable Reverend Sang Chul Lee. Thank you for your presence in our communities. Thank you for choosing Canada as a home. Thank you for making us a better country.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I say to all of the Korean guests annyong haseyo.

I am very pleased to support my good friend from Scarborough–Rouge River's bill establishing the month of October as Korean Heritage Month. Korean Heritage Month, when it's enacted, is going to be a recognition of the tremendous vitality of the Korean community here in Toronto.

As he said in the preamble to the bill, and I want to quote from the preamble, it says—just a second, I've got it right here. Oh, I had the French version. Anyway, the preamble in the bill recognizes, as the member for Scarborough-Rouge River has said, the great contributions to the economic life of this province, to the political life of this province and to the social life of this province.

The month of October is very important in Korean culture because that's when the national holiday is celebrated, and other events, in that month of October. I was elected in October—October 4, I believe it was—in 2003. The very first public event that I went to was in Willowdale, at Mel Lastman Square, and it was a Korean heritage fall celebration. I met the then consul general at the time and I met many Koreans on that day. That was 12 or 13 years ago. That is one of the great festivals I look forward to, along with all of the other events that are held in the Korean community. Whether it's events to support Korean senior citizens, whether it's events to support, as is coming up this weekend, I believe, the Korean scholarship gala, the Korean community makes a tremendous contribution on all sectors in our society.

But the real story here, I think, is that in the bill the preamble talks about the first Korean wave of immigration that came to Canada, in the early 1950s. That was very hard, to uproot and move to a new country.

In many ways, the real story is how that Korean community has established itself over almost three generations now, from the early 1950s to 2017. Now Koreans are playing important roles in politics, as the member opposite from Scarborough-Rouge River takes his seat. There are physicians, heart surgeons, lawyers, successful business persons, real estate entrepreneurs, school-teachers and nurses. The Korean community has made this tremendous impact on our life here.

I was very happy to visit Korea recently with the Premier. Two things come to mind. We spent time in the modern, dynamic city of Seoul, with all the traffic, the lights, the office towers and the business activity, and that was impressive. Then we spent a day at the Andong traditional village, which recognized traditional Korean cultural life the way it was lived 1,000 years ago.

I think the great contribution of the Korean community is the way they have melded and blended what modern life has to offer with the traditional values that the Korean community respects.

So I say: kamsah hamnidha.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of MPP Cho's private member's bill, as it rightly honours the innumerable contributions made by Korean new Canadians throughout our province. Today, Korea is one of the top sources for new Canadians in Ontario. Korean Canadians continue to shape our provincial story through their contributions to the economic, social and cultural fabric of our communities.

Ontario is a province founded on multiculturalism. Through this private member's bill, we have an oppor-

tunity to acknowledge the unique contributions of Korean Canadians in enriching our vibrant society.

One of the most cherished and distinct elements of our province is our diversity. More than one in five Ontarians trace their roots to Asia, and Ontarians of Korean heritage are a vital part of our province. I have seen many positive outcomes in local communities when we work in partnership with diverse groups who choose Ontario as their home.

Prior to being elected as the MPP for Whitby-Oshawa 14 months ago, I was the chairperson of the region of Durham's local partnership on diversity and immigration for seven years. During that period, two Durham diversity and immigration community plans were developed and implemented throughout the eight municipalities that form the region. Members of the partnership council, including Korean organizations, demonstrated how they, as institutional leaders, operationalized processes and policies that incorporate the needs of all populations into the planning process. The Korean community led the way by creating, sharing and replicating good ideas and inclusive practices across Durham region.

At a high level, this partnership council's aim was to strengthen the role of local communities throughout the region in serving and integrating new Canadians to the region. We're already seeing positive results due to the partnership council's work. For example, many institutions and organizations across Durham region have incorporated the principles of diversity and inclusion into their foundational documents. Communication, education and information are being valued more highly throughout the region as diverse groups articulate what inclusion means to them.

It takes an entire community to create a culture of inclusion, to successfully welcome, integrate and settle newcomers. But all residents in the region of Durham, including the Korean Canadian community, continue to contribute to this process, to the benefit of all who live there.

That is why it is time to acknowledge and celebrate the positive impact that Korean Canadians continue to make on our diversity, prosperity, and growth. It is time, therefore, to support MPP Cho's private member's bill and acknowledge the tremendous contribution that Korean Canadians are making to building up the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Annyong hashimnikka, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak. I'm very supportive of the member's bill to move forward on building a Korean heritage month here in the province of Ontario.

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I have a particular interest in Korea. As some people know, I lived in Korea for almost three years. I can say without a question that I love Korea. I love Korea; I loved my time in Korea. Korea is a beautiful place.

It's interesting that the member talked about the economic development in that country. It's often referred to

as the Korean miracle. I believe it's the Han River, and what took place in that region. Could you imagine a country, that was one of the poorest countries after the Korean War, establishing itself today as the fourth most powerful economy in Asia, and eleventh on the planet? This is incredible, what the Koreans were able to do. It's not because it was luck or a couple of good people; it was about the Korean people as a whole.

In my experience in Korea, Korean people are one of the hardest-working peoples that I've ever met, but I think it goes even beyond their hard work. The Koreans have tradition and heritage that goes so far back, and it's so embedded into who they are.

I'll give you one example. When we talk about the heritage of Korea—their Thanksgiving is called Chuseok. One of the observations I had was about respect in the culture. During Chuseok, the families will go to a grave where their ancestors were—they can go back four, five, six generations—and they go and pay respect to their ancestors. Little kids go and they pay their respects. It's something that I think some cultures have lost. The Koreans, throughout this entire transition, still are a culture that is so deep in tradition.

Their influence in music, dance, literature, pottery and architecture is not only specific to the Korean peninsula. Not many people know, but Japanese culture has been influenced by Korea; Chinese culture has been influenced by Korea. Korea is a place that has an influence in the region.

Madam Speaker, I was so proud to be in Korea. I think that as Ontarians, there is so much we can gain from learning more about what Korea has to offer.

We say in Ontario that diversity is our greatest strength.

Remarks in Korean.

It's Korean for "Diversity is our greatest strength." I probably didn't get it perfect. But I know that the more diversity we have here in the province of Ontario, the better we are to build the province up.

I just want to say thank you to all of our guests here today and show my respect to everyone for being here. Again, I love Korea, and I think that the more we can learn from Korea, the better we are as Ontarians.

Kamsah hamnida.

Thank you so much for being here.

Thank you to the member for bringing this important initiative here to the Legislature so that all Ontarians can celebrate in October, during Chuseok. It will be a great opportunity for everyone to learn about the beautiful Korean culture.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to the bill, Korean Heritage Month Act, 2017, introduced by my colleague Raymond Cho, from Scarborough-Rouge River.

This bill is intended to recognize the contributions made by Korean Canadians by declaring the month of October as Korean Heritage Month in Ontario. Our

province is now home to about 80,000 Korean Canadians, who started to migrate to Ontario after the Second World War, 1939 to 1945, and the Korean War, 1950 to 1953, both of which heavily affected the Korean peninsula.

Korean Canadians have made important contributions to the cultural, social, economic and political fabric of our society. One of them is Yonah Martin, who emigrated to British Columbia in the 1970s. She is the first Canadian of Korean descent to serve in the Senate of Canada, and the first Korean Canadian parliamentarian in Canadian history. She was appointed to the Senate by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

My esteemed colleague the MPP for Scarborough-Rouge River, Raymond Cho, prior to being elected, worked as a social worker for the Catholic Children's Aid Society, the Toronto Board of Education and the Scarborough Board of Education.

I'd like to also thank the special members of the Korean community who have joined us in the gallery today.

Having a Korean heritage month will provide an opportunity to acknowledge, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements and contributions of Korean Canadians, who are one of the most entrepreneurial peoples living in our country.

October is a historically significant month for the Korean Canadian community. On October 3, the Korean people celebrate National Foundation Day, which is the legendary foundation of the first Korean state of Gojoseon. This is widely seen by the Korean people as the creation and foundation of the modern Korean state.

I understand that Canada and Korea established diplomatic relations some 54 years ago. Since then, our bilateral trade has reached \$8.6 billion, with half of that in exports. Some 180,000 Koreans visit Canada, including my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. My riding has actually hosted cultural exchanges with Korea.

The town of Durham, which is located in Grey county, has been twinned with Cheonan city in Korea. This partnership led to visits and student summer camp programs between Cheonan and Durham. In the summer of 2009, West Grey hosted 22 Korean students and five tae kwon do grandmasters, treating them to some great rural pastimes, such as tubing on Lake Rosalind, horseback riding and even four-wheeling.

In 2010, a group of Korean students and teachers were part of an exchange program with the Bluewater District School Board, taking part in the first-ever English as a second language—ESL—camp at the Institute for Outdoor Education and Environmental Studies. In return, locals were treated to tae kwon do classes every morning in the gymnasium at Peninsula Shores District School. They also included trips to Sauble Beach, Bruce's Caves and Bruce Peninsula National Park, where students tried wilderness survival, horseback riding, sports and friendly competitions.

I support this bill as it's rooted in our province's inclusivity, respect and acknowledgement of our ever-growing and diverse province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour for me to be able to speak to this important bill, the Korean Heritage Month Act. I congratulate the member opposite and thank him for introducing it.

Annyong haseyo.

I want to start by welcoming our guests from the Korean Canadian community. It's wonderful to see so many familiar faces, people I've had the privilege of working with and so many friends. I thank you for being here.

So many of the members who have spoken prior have spoken about the contributions of the community and spoken about your heritage and about your history. There's so much more that could be said, but what I wanted to focus on was what makes this bill important to me.

I will share with you a brief story that members of the Legislature have heard me share before about my upbringing. My grandparents immigrated to Canada after World War II. They were very proud of their heritage, as I know all of you are. It was very important to my grandparents, in particular, that I learn about my history and heritage. They were not of Korean descent; they immigrated to Canada from eastern Europe, from the Ukraine.

To make sure that I learned about my heritage, my grandparents insisted that I attend Saturday school, where I would learn language, history, culture, traditions, etc. I have to be honest with you: When I was a teenager and a kid, I wasn't so fond of Saturday school. But every day after school, my grandfather would sit down with me and we would do our homework together. He would help me with my homework for the next Saturday. One day, I was particularly frustrated, and I said to my grandfather, "Dido"—I called him Dido—"I don't want to do this anymore. I want to stop." He said, "You can't stop, and I'll tell you why." He said, "The first is because I'm incredibly proud of my history and heritage, and I know that if you learn more you will be too." He also said, "But I want you to learn about the history of our people because so many of them came here to Canada. They came before you did, they came before I did, and they helped to make this country great. I want you to learn about the people who make Canada great."

To me, what makes this bill special is—yes, of course, we celebrate Korean heritage and Korean culture and Korean history, and not only the history from Korea but the history and the traditions you've brought here—but I think we also celebrate the contributions that you've made here in Canada, to this country, and how you've helped to make this country great.

I look forward to celebrating Korean Heritage Month with you in the years to come, celebrating your history and your heritage, celebrating the contributions that you have made and celebrating the many contributions that you will make in the years to come.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour to be able to rise in this House again and speak to the bill brought forward by the honourable member for Scarborough-Rouge River. I want to commend the honourable member for the excellent work he has done here in the Legislature and within our party, not only to speak to the issues that impact his constituents, not only to be a strong advocate for the riding of Scarborough-Rouge River, but really to bring a very important voice to the Ontario PC caucus, a very important perspective. The honourable member entered the Legislature just a few months prior to my entry, and I think it's fair to say that he has indeed made a significant impact on this House in the short amount of time that he has been here, so I want to thank him.

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I also want to, as the other speakers have done, welcome all his guests here. I'm not sure if I'm saying it correctly, but annyong haseyo.

Interjection.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Annyong haseyo. Perfect. Welcome to the Legislature today.

It's an honour to be able to stand and rise to speak to this because the Korean community and the Canadian community and Canadians of Korean heritage do indeed have deep ties. They have deep roots working back decades, working back several decades—indeed, I would say prior to not only the 1950s and 1960s when we really saw the increase and a large amount of immigration from Korea to Canada, but a continuing growth between the two nations and also a continuing celebration of Korean heritage, which I think is a wonderful thing.

Something I did want to touch on very briefly, and one of the reasons I wanted to speak to this legislation today and to speak to the honourable member's bill, is that I believe quite likely—and I haven't confirmed this, but I'm sure that many Canadians of Korean heritage who came to Canada from Korea came here for very similar reasons that my grandparents came to Canada. The reality is that my grandparents lived through the Second World War, the horrors of Nazi Germany, and they had the opportunity to see the Canadian Armed Forces come into their town to liberate them from that regime. That filled them with a sense of gratitude, and also a sense of connection to the Canadian people and a connection to Canadian soldiers in a way that led eventually to them immigrating to Canada here in the early 1950s, and moving to Niagara and raising their family there.

I want to mention, because I'm not sure if it has been mentioned yet, the very important and pivotal role that the Canadian Armed Forces played in the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, as they fought against the communist dictatorship of the north that was attempting to encroach on South Korea. As we still see, there's ever that need to be watchful and aware of the threats that come now from North Korea as a nation. But also, I believe that those contributions Canadians made then, where 25,000 served overseas and over 500 Canadian servicemen and service-women died in the line of duty there defending the freedoms of Koreans, would have played an integral role,

and I'm sure is an important reason behind many people from Korea coming to Canada as a place of hope and prosperity.

Koreans, though, have made significant contributions to our social fabric, our economic fabric and our cultural fabric, not only here in Ontario, but across Canada. I think it's an excellent time and long overdue that we now commemorate that, that we celebrate a month, that we have a Korean heritage month, that we take the time to reflect, that we take the time to think about what sort of impact not only the Korean people have had, but all immigration has had on our beautiful province, where we have this broad tapestry. We have a broad diversity and a beautiful mosaic within our province that we can celebrate, that we can treasure and that we can protect, moving forward.

The reality is that Koreans make up one of the largest non-European ethnic groups in Canada, according to Statistics Canada. Almost all Korean immigration to Canada has been from South Korea. The earliest contact started in 1890 through Canadian missionaries working in Korea, and the member from Scarborough-Rouge River spoke about the missionary impact there. The member for Parkdale-High Park also spoke about how important the faith has been to many of those who moved to Korea. I know in my home riding of Niagara West-Glanbrook there's a Korean Presbyterian church. I've had the opportunity to speak with some members of that community, and it truly is a rich, vibrant community. That is something I think we should all be celebrating, that beauty of freedom of religious expression we find here in Ontario, and freedom of cultural expression as well.

I'm pleased that ever since the 1890s, we've seen a growing friendship between Canada and Korea. I'm excited that we have the opportunity to stand in a very meaningful, tangible sense to celebrate that friendship, and I look forward to seeing it grow, so I want to commend the member for Scarborough-Rouge River for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I look forward to supporting it in a few moments.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to address this matter today. I want to thank the member from Scarborough-Rouge River for bringing this bill forward.

I understand that many people in Canada still think primarily of our European roots. I think if you want to really understand Canada, if you want to understand Ontario or Toronto, you have to understand that we have roots planted firmly in Asia, as well as roots planted firmly in Europe—Africa increasingly, some in South America, but very heavily from Asia, and the Korean community is a substantial part of that Canadian reality, a very substantial part. Having this recognition just makes sure that people broadly understand who we are as a people and where we come from.

Korea has had a very—what can I say?—colourful history; like Canada, they are located beside a super-

power. Korea, located beside China, and on the other side Japan, has had to deal with the influence of major powers throughout its history, and certainly the 20th century was an extraordinarily difficult time. It was a century of wars, of occupation.

You look at the people who survived that, who went through wars that completely devastated the industry and the economy of that peninsula, and rebuilt from those ashes an economy that is of global consequence, an economy that produces sophisticated high-tech products and a population that is highly educated—a player on the world scene.

We here in Toronto and in Ontario have been very lucky that Koreans decided to come here—well-educated people, often working in areas that did not use all of their education. As you're well aware, Speaker, we have many Korean families running convenience stores, doing an excellent job, making things work where it's clearly a very difficult economic ground to till. But they have the application, they have the energy and they have the commitment to make those businesses work. It is they and their children who bring the full range of their talents to bear on our economy.

It was interesting to me when I was doing some research on this—and I'd always noticed Koreatown on Bloor Street. I hadn't thought about it before, but of course it was established there because it was close to the University of Toronto. There's such a deep commitment in that culture to education, to training and to developing the full capabilities of all in that community so that they can have the biggest impact possible and make the biggest contribution they can to the economy as a whole.

We, in this city, benefit from that. If we fully take advantage of those who come here, take advantage of their entrepreneurial spirit and their intellectual capacity, we actually will do extraordinarily well.

Again, to the member from Scarborough-Rouge River: Thank you so much for bringing this forward. Thank you so much for enlarging our sense of who we are as a people and recognizing this community, which has been such a big part, and a growing part now, of Toronto for so long.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? Further debate? Last call: Further debate?

I will return back to the member from Scarborough-Rouge River to wrap up.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I feel very humbled. Since September of last year, this is the happiest day for me and all the leaders from the Korean community.

First of all, I'd like to thank the honourable MPP from Parkdale-High Park. I was really impressed that Reverend DiNovo knows more about the Very Reverend Sang Chul Lee than myself; he was my minister. Thank you for your kind words.

The honourable MPP from Willowdale: He's more Korean than Canadian, I think. He has more Koreans in his riding. He's more popular than myself. He comes to

every Korean event. Thank you for your kind words and your support.

My next-door neighbour, the MPP for Whitby-Oshawa: Thank you for recognizing that Koreans participate in all kinds of planning and community activities. Thank you for saying that.

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The member from Don Valley East: I would like to thank Minister Michael Coteau from the bottom of my heart. I enjoy a great life in Canada, but the minister, he went to Korea and spent more than two years teaching young children English in Korea. It means a lot. That's why when he said, from an evidence-based expression of Koreans' characteristics of working hard, he knows it. I really appreciate it, Minister Michael Coteau.

And Yvan Baker, the honourable MPP from Etobicoke Centre: You summarized very well the importance of recognizing roots of heritage, and my good—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. John Vanthof: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a committee of the Legislative Assembly, with authority to meet at the call of the Chair, should be established as follows:

That the membership of the committee be comprised of members of the Legislative Assembly representing the following districts: Algoma-Manitoulin; Kenora-Rainy River; Nickel Belt; Nipissing; Parry Sound-Muskoka, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke; Sault Ste. Marie; Sudbury; Thunder Bay-Atikokan; Thunder Bay-Superior North; Timiskaming-Cochrane; and Timmins-James Bay;

That the committee be empowered to consider and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations on all policies and legislation of the province that directly impact northern Ontario; and

To which any bills whose principal focus and impact affect northern Ontario may be referred.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Vanthof has moved private member's notice of motion number 8. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. John Vanthof: I don't think it's a surprise to anyone in northern Ontario that northerners feel disenfranchised. They feel very disenfranchised from the more populated areas of the province. I'm just going to give a couple of examples. One is that we keep hearing we're going to have more long-distance education and we're going to do more over the Internet, and that's going to help isolated areas. Isolated areas don't have broadband. Again, we hear that over and over and over. For me it started when our train was cancelled. The latest example—my northern members—to the government's credit, the return of the pilot project for the spring bear

hunt: No one asked northerners how to implement this, and quite frankly, it's a mess.

To try and get over this, the goal of this committee would be to take all the northern members and allow them to make recommendations on legislation so that it would actually work in northern Ontario. It wouldn't be the goal of this committee to veto legislation. A government gets elected, it has a mandate to govern. So it's not the purpose of this committee to veto legislation or to try to overpower the mandate of the government. The purpose of this committee is to basically give a northern smell test to legislation, for lack of a better term. That's why we would take all the members from every northern riding—and they are not mentioned here, but there is an electoral commission going on as we speak and there may be one or two more northern ridings created; of course, they would be included in this committee.

This isn't the first time that the NDP, through me, has proposed this committee. The first time was in 2012. At that time we had a different northern boundary and it caused quite a bit of concern. The member from—what's your—

Mr. Norm Miller: Parry Sound.

Mr. John Vanthof: —Parry Sound raised some of those concerns, rightfully so. I recall we had a meeting in Seguin township and there were a lot of people there. Partly because of that meeting, we moved the boundary, because there were a lot of concerns.

After the legislation passed the committee last time, the government in response created a northern government committee comprised of only Liberal members who represented the north. That didn't solve the problem because that was much more political. We're not trying to make political policy; we're actually trying to take legislation proposed and make it work. So that fell by the wayside.

The one thing that was missing in the previous iteration of the northern committee: Every committee should have a strong terms of reference to what they're actually looking for. We had the opportunity to work with the Rural Ontario Municipal Association. They've created a discussion document called the Rural and Northern Lens. Basically, the discussion document says almost the same thing—has the same purpose—of how to make sure that legislation actually works for northern and rural.

I would like to propose that the 12 questions that were in this document, that they would be the terms of reference for the northern committee. The 12 questions are, "For rural and northern Ontario, does the proposed initiative:

"(1) Benefit or hinder the fiscal realities of rural and northern Ontario?

"(2) Have a business case that accounts for low and sparse populations?

"(3) Enhance opportunities in rural and northern Ontario?

"(4) Help or hinder goals of sustainability blending environmental, social and economic factors?

“(5) Consider how and if rural people will be able to access it?”—like long-distance education with non-existent broadband;

“(6) Consider all options for delivery, ensuring efficiency, the potential for co-delivery and an acceptable administrative impact on municipalities?

“(7) Account for the needs of special populations (such as youth, elderly and immigrants)?

“(8) Have adequate human and financial resources to be effective?

“(9) Ensure that rural and northern communities are receiving equitable treatment or services relative to others in the province?

“(10) Recognize the geography, weather and scale of rural and northern Ontario and include adjusted program criteria to accommodate these realities?

“(11) Accommodate the aspirations of residents from rural communities and the north?

“(12) Build upon the input and advice of rural residents, communities and municipalities?”

I would really like to thank ROMA for working with us and allowing us to use their document and to use those 12 questions as our proposed terms of reference. With those questions, I would really like to commend them on the document. It’s worth a read because it was like reading what we’ve been feeling. They did a good job.

Specifically, I’d like to recognize the chair of ROMA, Ronald Holman. He’s the mayor of the township of Rideau Lakes. I would really like to thank them for their work.

Since we’ve been working on this for a while, we’ve gotten support from many townships and towns. The one I would specifically like to mention is FONOM, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities. I would just like to read their letter into the record. It’s signed by Alan Spacek:

“On behalf of” FONOM, “thank you for your letter requesting support for a motion in the Legislature to create a northern committee. I am pleased to confirm that your request was supported at the regular meeting of the board of directors held on March 24, 2017.

“Ensuring that legislation that reaches second reading is reviewed by a committee comprised of all northern MPPs will help to ensure that well-meaning legislation that may work in the greater Toronto area does not have unintended consequences in northern Ontario.

“FONOM also believes that the 10-point checklist outlined in the Rural and Northern Lens—A Voice for Rural and Northern Ontario”—which I just read—“as developed by the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), would be an effective guideline to ensure any and all legislation introduced would be both sustainable and beneficial for northern Ontario.

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“If you have any questions or require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues.

“Sincerely,
“Alan Spacek.”

I think Alan encapsulates it pretty well. It is not the goal—and I need to repeat this—of this initiative to take away the mandate of the government. Once a government is elected, they have a mandate to govern. The role of this committee is to make sure that the legislation works, because we have representation by population and, quite frankly, the vast majority of Ontarians don’t understand rural Ontario, northern Ontario, because they don’t live there. That’s no fault of their own. If we had people from rural Ontario running a huge metropolis like Toronto, I think we’d make a mess as well.

But the one thing different about people from rural Ontario and northern Ontario: We, at some point in our lives, always have to go to bigger centres, whether it’s for health care or enjoyment or entertainment. There are no Blue Jays games in Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Unfortunately.

Mr. John Vanthof: Unfortunately. But we all have at one point gone to major centres, and we’re proud of them. I’m proud that Toronto and Hamilton are Ontario. We come here, so we have a bit of an understanding of the city, but for a lot of Ontarians who live here, in the southern part of the province, I bet you many of them have a better understanding of Florida and Costa Rica than they do of Timiskaming–Cochrane, because they’ve been there more often.

That’s why we believe that this committee would be a huge step forward. It’s our goal that perhaps this committee would be a template for others. The goal of this committee is northern Ontario, but there are other parts of the province—rural Ontario faces many of the same issues. Perhaps there could be an agricultural committee that looks at: How would that work on the back roads of anywhere where agriculture is a major force in the economy?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Use an app.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, well, an app for an Internet that doesn’t exist. As you can tell, the lack of broadband, Speaker, really bothers me.

It’s about understanding. The way we are going to make this province stronger is to understand, and the way we’re going to make better legislation, regardless of which party is in power, is to understand all parts of the province.

If this committee can be one small step to make it work a bit better so that, at the very least—although no one is always going to agree with initiatives put forward by the government—we would have some assurance that, if there was something that was absolutely not going to work, we could make sure the government was aware, that it could be debated beforehand.

My ideal idea is that this committee would be able, after second reading, to look at the legislation, put forward the recommendations, and that those recommendations would go back before the House at third reading, where the government of the day could take them out. But at the very least, they would see the light of day and people would feel represented.

I hope that all the members in this House will see it among themselves to pass this motion today, that we can

work together to make sure that the government actually implements it and that we all have the goodwill to try and make sure that it works to represent the people of northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm going to speak for about four minutes.

I understand where the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane is coming from on this. But let me say this: I think what he's asking for—that there be another body that sort of has oversight and approval and review of what goes on in this chamber—is not the right thing to do. In effect, what the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane is proposing is a Senate-like body. I just pose this question: Is that somewhere where you really want to go, to set up something akin to the Senate?

I did a quick calculation. To the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane's point that northern points of view are not taken into account, I would remind the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane that there are 11 members in this chamber—11 out of 107. I just did the math here. That's about 11% or 12% of the members of this chamber who are from northern Ontario.

In the event that that has escaped his knowledge, the members are the member for Nipissing, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the member for Timmins-James Bay, the member himself from Timiskaming-Cochrane, the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, the member from Kenora-Rainy River, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, the member for Sudbury and the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

I've been in this chamber 13 years now, since 2003. By way of compliment to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane and those other 10 members I've mentioned and some of the northern members who have retired or gone on to another career, in my view some of the strongest, if not the strongest, most opinionated—and I use that word in the complimentary sense—on matters that have come before this chamber are the northern members. Northern members are no pushovers. The northern members in our Liberal caucus articulate and push and drive the northern agenda. I sit here in this chamber, and I know the northern members in the Progressive Conservative caucus and the northern members in the NDP caucus are not sleeping on the job, because when a bill comes up or a piece of legislation or an initiative that has impact on the north, they are the first to be heard, front and centre.

So I say, with respect to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane—and I choose my words carefully here and I mean no insult by this—I think the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane diminishes his importance when he proposes or says that he feels he has got to be part of a group of members because that's the only way his voice can be heard. I can't imagine anybody saying to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin or the member from

Kenora-Rainy River or the member from Timmins-James Bay—can you imagine the member for Timmins-James Bay not making himself heard, not being heard, not being paid attention to?

I say again to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane—and I say this with respect and no malice or anything—I think you are, without realizing it, subtly diminishing your input and impact in this chamber.

This is an action that is not needed. All of those 11 members put northern affairs right at the top of the agenda.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's an honour to speak to this motion by the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. I know the member from Nipissing would have liked to have spoken, but his flights were cancelled tonight, so he had to leave early; and also the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke had work back in the riding he had to get to.

1530

I'm pleased to speak to it. I want to commend the member for bringing this motion forward now for a second time, with one big change, and that was, the first time around it did omit Parry Sound-Muskoka. As he already mentioned, he was very good to come to a public meeting in Seguin township that had a lot of people and a lot of councillors who certainly made their opinions well known. A lot of the councils' past resolutions I think were sent to him saying that he should be including Parry Sound-Muskoka. So I'm pleased to support the motion with that important change.

This motion is particularly timely following the government's budget released just a week ago. In the 50-minute budget speech, the Minister of Finance only spoke the word "northern" once and did not mention the Ring of Fire. I had an opportunity in the debate on the budget motion to make that point: that in previous budgets, the \$1-billion commitment to the Ring of Fire was heralded. So it was obvious that something had changed, that it was not mentioned at all in this budget. More importantly, we just haven't seen any progress on the Ring of Fire.

Also in the budget, it failed to say anything about forestry. Given the comments of the US President about our softwood lumber industry, I know that everyone in that sector was hoping for some indication that this government is working in their best interests.

In this budget, the Wynne government cut the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines' budget by \$70 million, or 10%. They also cut the Ministry of Natural Resources by \$37 million. These two ministries have a huge impact on the people and the economy in northern Ontario.

This government knows that northern Ontarians are not confident in their local economy, because they did polling. Just last year, the Ministry of Finance polled Ontarians from different regions about their feelings about their local economies, and 94% of northerners were either "concerned" or "very concerned"—94%. Despite

that knowledge, the budget offered little hope to our northern citizens.

A legislative committee of northern members would give northerners a voice that they don't always get under this government. For example, we have Bill 39, which is being debated later this afternoon, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act, which is currently in third reading. The government pushed that through committee with only two days of hearings, both held here at Queen's Park. Most mining—some happens in southern Ontario but the great majority of it is in the north, and yet no hearings in the north.

Bill 68, the Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act: Again, the committee hearings were all held here in Toronto, despite a motion by my colleague the member from Oxford to have at least one meeting in northern Ontario. He made that request because he had heard from northern mayors who were concerned about this bill, but that was turned down by this government. Those are just two examples of legislation currently before this House which the government pushed through without hearing from northern Ontarians.

This government has a long history of passing legislation that affects the north without consulting northerners. Take the Endangered Species Act in 2007: three days of committee hearings, all in downtown Toronto. How many people in downtown Toronto have any experience with endangered species? The effect is mainly in northern Ontario.

You look at the caribou management plans that are going into effect: They're having a huge negative impact on the forestry sector that's so important for jobs in northern Ontario. Even when they go through the motions of consulting northerners, they don't listen; for example, the Far North Act. The act essentially limits development of 225,000 square kilometres of public land in the north. That's roughly 50% of the Far North. While this government did hold committee hearings in the north on this bill, they didn't listen to what northerners had to say. Grand Chief Stan Beardy of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation at the time said it best when he said, "With the greatest respect to the honourable members, you don't live in this land you are trying to govern. Neither do the civil servants of the Ontario government. Yet for some reason, they feel compelled to govern us from afar. We cannot accept that."

When you travel around the north, the biggest single issue—if you had to say one—that you hear about is Toronto-centric decision-making: decisions made in downtown Toronto by people who don't go to the north, don't understand it and usually negatively affect the people who actually live there, especially their ability to have a job and a livelihood. Nor did they listen to the Ontario Forest Industries Association, which said, "There is no scientific rationale to support the permanent protection of at least 50% of the northern boreal. The decision to permanently protect at least 50% of the area, or 225,000 square kilometres, was a unilateral, political decision made by the government of Ontario to satisfy southern special interests."

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce does listen to its members in northern Ontario, and as a result, they recommended that this government repeal the Far North Act. But would this government listen? No. I gave them the opportunity when I brought forward a private member's bill to repeal the Far North Act in March 2012. During the debate on my private member's bill, then-Minister Gravelle acknowledged that the First Nations had issues with the way in which the Far North Act was introduced: "Yes, there is no question: Grand Chief Stan Louttit and many other chiefs that were on that phone call that I was on certainly expressed their concerns about the process by which the Far North legislation was brought forward."

Another example of how this government treats northern Ontarians is their anti-SLAPP legislation, which allows organizations to make false allegations against businesses and industries without fear of repercussions. With their anti-SLAPP legislation, Bill 52, the government has sided with international environmental lobbyists who don't always rely on the facts, over Canadian forestry companies that are environmentally responsible and employ northern Ontarians.

Our party was the only party that stood with northern Ontario and the forestry industry by voting against the anti-SLAPP bill and speaking up at committee, pointing out that Greenpeace had written their members, emailed their members, and told them to write false product reviews to Best Buy, who happened to be supplied by Resolute Forest Products. What's the result of that? Lost jobs in Ontario. They just switched to a different company in the United States, and we lost the jobs in northern Ontario. Our party stood up for northern Ontario forestry.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association's REAL Treehugger program. NOMA, which represents residents of northwestern Ontario, launched this program in 2013 to remind the Premier that the forest industry cares about the environment while providing jobs for area communities.

I want to read a bit about NOMA's REAL Treehugger program: "A REAL Treehugger knows that sustainable forestry renews and replenishes the ecosystem, promotes economic growth, accumulates more carbon, and is the lifeblood of communities." I completely agree with that statement. That is the reality that southern Ontario environmental lobbyists, many of whom have probably never set foot in the boreal forest, just don't understand. Unfortunately, that is who this government listened to rather than to northerners.

It isn't just on legislation that northerners need a voice; other government policies need to be considered from a northern perspective; for example, closing tourism information offices. Just last summer, we had a caucus meeting in Kenora. The easiest way to get to Kenora is actually to fly to Winnipeg, so I flew to Winnipeg, rented a car and drove into Ontario, where there's a "Welcome to Ontario" booth. The only problem with it is that it's got a chain across the gate and it's closed. It's pretty sad

when you come into the province of Ontario on the main highway, the Trans-Canada highway, and the tourist and information booth is closed. Yet when you drive back into Manitoba, their tourist information centre is alive and well with all kinds of services and people available. Again, with provincial parks, when this government closed provincial parks, where did they close most of them? In northern Ontario.

Perhaps a northern legislative committee could review other issues based in the north, such as health care. We know that where you live in Ontario determines the kind of health care you receive. A recent study from the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences and the Sunnybrook Schulich Heart Centre found that people in northern Ontario face nearly double the levels of cardiovascular health issues compared to those living in the GTA. The study indicates that the three healthiest LHINs are all in the GTA, whereas the three least healthy LHINs include the North East, North West, and North Simcoe Muskoka LHINs.

Another study from Health Quality Ontario states that the health outcomes of people who are living in the north tend to lag behind the provincial averages.

Lifespans are shorter in the north. Residents of the North West LHIN can expect their lives to be 2.9 years shorter than southern Ontarians'. Why are the life expectancies shorter for northern Ontarians? People in the north are less likely to receive preventive screening tests or visit a family doctor.

If this motion passes, Madam Speaker, and the government sets up a committee of northern MPPs, I will ask the committee to look at ways to improve health care in northern Ontario.

1540

I'm starting to run out of time, but those are just some examples of times when this government has acted without consideration for how their actions would impact northern Ontarians—or, in the case of health care, not acted on behalf of northern Ontarians. So, Madam Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane that northerners do need a way to ensure that their voices are not just heard, but really listened to here at Queen's Park. I commend him for bringing the motion forward.

As I stated previously in my talk, it is the single biggest frustration you experience when you travel around the north: Northerners look at this legislation that they have to live by, and they wonder what people down at Queen's Park were thinking when they passed the legislation. It's really frustrating, and if anything, it's gotten worse in the last number of years. You don't have to travel far in the north to hear that sentiment.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's an honour to add my voice to the debate on my colleague from Timiskaming—Cochrane's motion, which seeks to establish what is essentially a northern committee of this Legislature that would have the authority to consider and report on policies that directly impact northern Ontario.

Northern alienation—that is, the feeling of being separated from and overlooked by the decision-makers in the south—is by no means a new issue, but in my experience, the disaffection now is both more widespread and severe than it has ever been. Over the past couple of years in particular, my constituents routinely tell me that they feel as though they are in a no-win situation. They are losing hope for building a bright future and a better life, not only as a result of affordability issues such as the job- and household-budget-killing hydro rates, the HST and the price of gasoline and home heating oil, but over virtually all government services that the rest of the province takes for granted.

A simple trip to the doctor illustrates the problem: the wait times, lack of local services, delayed or denied Northern Health Travel Grants and the long wait times for non-existent home care afterwards. And if the care requires travel, they better hope that they have access to a personal vehicle and that the weather is good, because intercommunity transportation is virtually non-existent and highway maintenance is the pits.

It's not only the outrageous costs and lack of services, but the lack of consultation and consideration of northerners by government when formulating policy that is ultimately too much to bear. It's not just that things are bad now; it's that without proper consultation and consideration of our needs going forward, how will they ever get better?

It's actually painful for many northerners to hear about the unprecedent investments and the billions of dollars that are going toward improving transit options in the south, when in the north we oftentimes have one single-lane highway to connect many of our communities and no regular intercommunity transportation option. Don't get me wrong: We do not begrudge the south for having their transportation woes addressed, but does it make sense for the government to subsidize transit in the south but not in the north, where it is often not profitable for private companies to step in and provide those services?

While we support the goals of cap-and-trade, is it really fair to impose additional taxes on gasoline when there are no public transit options, or on home heating oil or natural gas, when we reside in a colder climate? Heating our homes with electricity is not an option for many, as northerners are already paying hydro bills that are inflated due to remoteness.

It makes northerners angry when, with the stroke of a pen, decision-makers thousands of kilometres away can effectively shut down or seriously curtail our industries, thereby cutting the legs out from underneath northern families and whole communities. The north is at a breaking point. Northerners are tired of having to make a business case for what is a matter of fairness and equality. We are tired of being treated like a colony where our needs don't matter, we don't have a say, and we ship our wealth to the south, only to have cents on the dollar reinvested in our communities.

Some believe the answer is separation. I believe the best, and right now the only, shot we've got to stay together is to establish this committee, thereby giving

northerners a true voice in the decisions that affect us. I encourage all members of this House to support this motion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Before I weigh into this debate I'd like to just introduce a couple of people who are joining us at the Legislature here: Maria Arnholm, who is a member of the Swedish Parliament. Thank you for joining us here today. Joining her is Johanna Elgenius, who is the deputy party secretary for the Swedish Liberal Party, and also—

Applause.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Yes, welcome—and also the consul general of Sweden. Welcome to the Legislature.

It's a pleasure for me to rise today to talk on this important issue. I'm from Toronto; I'm from the south. It's only been over the last few years that I've really experienced northern Ontario. I just want to start by saying that I believe the future of this province—a lot of our future in this province—and the prosperity of this province will continue to grow through what is taking place in northern Ontario.

Every single time I'm in northern Ontario, in places like Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay and Sudbury and Timmins—when I'm up in these places, I'm taken aback with the innovation and the resilience and the ability of these cities to do incredible things. I'm always impressed. As someone who didn't have the opportunity to grow up in the north, as a Torontonian, I'm just so impressed. Every time I'm up there, I'm just blown away with what I see, the innovation and the advanced technology and just what's going on in those communities.

I think that the concept of this committee is a good thing. I think that it's always important to have the proper lens when decision-making. We do this in our ministry. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services was established for that very purpose, to give a lens to children and young people here in the province of Ontario.

I know, of course, we've got a ministry that's entirely focused on northern development, and we've got ministers in our caucus who are very passionate about advancing northern interests. I heard a comment from the third party around sometimes they don't feel as though—it was framed in a way that there's not enough say or advocacy from northern Ontario. I wish you could just listen to a cabinet meeting once in a while or our caucus meetings, because the advocacy that comes from our members on this side of the House for northern Ontario is incredible. People like Bill Mauro, people like Michael Gravelle, Glenn and our former member, David Orazietti, are real advocates for the north.

I was looking through some of the numbers in regard to some of the programs that we've put in place. Our northern highway program received an increase in funding to \$648 million. That's our northern highway program. Hospitals in the north will receive at least a 2% increase in their budgets. Public transportation: There have been massive investments in Thunder Bay and Sault

Ste. Marie. We're investing \$100 million dollars into the new Natural Gas Grant Program in northern Ontario.

I know there are things that are going on. I know that in some areas the population is increasing and the opportunities are opening up. I think it's important that the services are in northern Ontario, so that a young person can grow up in a community where they have access to a good education and where they have access to a good post-secondary education and good health care. I think all of us would agree in the Legislature here that it's important that they have good access to a future, and that means to be able to raise a family, to find a good job, and to live long, healthy, productive lives in northern Ontario.

Like I said from the beginning, I believe the future of this province has a lot to do with northern Ontario. I see the opportunity that's out there. Sometimes when I come back from northern Ontario, I think to myself, if I was a bit younger and maybe starting my life, maybe in my early twenties, I think I would pick up my bags and maybe head up to northern Ontario, because I see the opportunity and the energy that's there. Maybe it's because there have been challenges—obviously, being in the north, there are challenges there—but they have always seemed to have that resilience that has brought on innovation and continued to develop communities in a way that I think all Ontarians are proud of.

1550

Thank you to the member opposite. I know that I will be supporting this initiative to create this committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a pleasure to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin, and particularly today for this great idea, this motion which the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane has brought forward. He brought it in back in 2012. I'll be touching on those issues really quickly from back in 2012 but, really, they're not different. They are still issues that we need to talk about. The truth is that northern Ontario doesn't have the same needs. Their problems are a little bit different, and our realities are certainly not what you face here in downtown Toronto.

I want to tell the minister that you don't have to be young to live in northern Ontario. I tell you, I have a lot of fun. I was actually on an ATV just this weekend, playing in a puddle of mud, and I had a great time. It was just a blast that I had there. That's an opportunity that I had that I would invite to you come and enjoy. These are in smaller communities such as in Sagamok, Spanish, Chapleau or Foley. These are all other places that are there to be discovered in northern Ontario, so I would invite you to come up.

The idea that the member brings forward and has highlighted is that the discussions that we need to have at this committee are really through a northern lens, as the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane brought up, when he did bring this up five years ago, and I want to go through some of those issues that we talked about the last time.

I challenge you, Speaker, that those issues are still ongoing. We talked about the price of electricity. We talked about the Far North Act. We talked about the lack of consultation in regard to the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act. We talked about the lack of consultation in regard to the forest tender. We talked about the HST and the challenges that were there on our gas prices and our home heating, and the longer periods of winter that we have in northern Ontario. We talked about the northern growth plan, and we're still talking about it. We talked about the funding for high-technology medical equipment.

We still need to have those discussions. That's the reality as far as what we have in northern Ontario, but let me talk to you about a few other issues that are specific to northern Ontario. One of them is the spring bear hunt. As northern MPPs, we gathered in Elk Lake just a little while ago and talked to the gentlemen who are there dealing with our bear population. Surprisingly, they're not part of the greater discussion in regard to how we're going to handle this.

Broadband infrastructure in northern Ontario: My goodness, we still don't have reliable Internet. There are kids in Dubreuilville who are ashamed because they go home, expected by their teachers to complete their homework, only to be told that mom and dad can't access broadband Internet at home. So they're going back to school and having their homework incomplete.

People who are looking at providing proper health care in this community, as well, cannot do it. Just filling out the proper government forms you need—they aren't there.

Northern Ontario highways: My goodness, just this week, where were the plows? From Chapleau across to Kapuskasing, Foleyet, Dubreuilville, Wawa—everywhere was under an immense snowstorm. Where were the plows? That's the purpose of this committee, to really look at the needs for northern Ontario.

Camping in northern Ontario: It's a joy to go out in the bush, enjoy the resources that are there and be respectful of the environment. But again, we're being threatened as far as the natural resources that we have being pulled out. No, we don't have museums. No, we don't have amusement parks. What we have is the bush. What we have are the resources that we go and enjoy. But that's the purpose of this committee, in order to have it.

And you know what else is a reality in northern Ontario? Power outages—not just for a couple of hours, but for days and weeks. Mattagami First Nation and the member from Nickel Belt would be able to tell you that. The people in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, on Manitoulin Island, have gone for hours and days without power. People are losing their food, people are losing their businesses, because all their resources and their stock are going to waste.

That's the purpose of this committee: to really talk about the challenges that are happening in northern Ontario.

I thank you for giving me the time to speak to this motion. I want to thank the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane once again for bringing it forward. It is a good idea.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm very proud to rise today to talk about northern Ontario and what a remarkable part of our province it is.

I remember the first time I went to northern Ontario. It was many, many years ago. I was working at Bell Canada at the time. I went to the Sudbury theatre and I saw a play called Cowgirls. I remember flying in, and it was remarkable to see this vast expanse of land and the warm community that was there to welcome me for my first northern experience.

Since being elected to this Legislature, I have had the privilege and the opportunity to visit many communities in the north, including the Far North, on some of our First Nations reserves, like Moose Factory Island. I got to stay overnight there at the ecolodge, as part of the select committee on developmental disabilities and dual diagnoses. As well, I recently went to Sioux Lookout and really saw the bond that the community has for each other.

There are many plans and initiatives that are under way to support northern communities. I'm very proud of what this government is doing and the work that is happening to support northern communities.

Having a committee that focuses and has a lens on the north is absolutely welcome. I know that our northern members are passionate supporters and advocates and strong voices for the north here, and are making sure that, as a province, we're one Ontario, that we're working together so that all Ontarians can succeed.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to start with the comments from the minister of aboriginal affairs, saying that somehow or other, this motion means that members of northern Ontario are feeling that they don't have a voice. That is not the issue. There is no member in this assembly—I don't care if you're from northern Ontario or southern Ontario—who thinks that they don't have a voice. The issue is that we need some sort of a mechanism to give northern Ontario an ability to have a lens on what happens, because there's a real sense in northern Ontario that—

Hon. Michael Coteau: That's what the minister just said.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I'm not disagreeing, but I'm talking to the other minister.

There's a real sense in northern Ontario that there is an alienation between north and south on how decisions are made.

For example, when we did the Far North Act, First Nations communities were completely offside. I remember Stan Beardy and the rest of the chiefs from northwestern and northeastern Ontario, who were standing at the committee and urging the government not to do what

they were doing, because it didn't serve their interests and they didn't feel that the government should move forward with that particular bill.

As my colleague from Timiskaming—Cochrane says, this bill is not about giving members of the north a veto on decisions made by the government. Every government has a right to govern. This is a step where a member can say, "Hang on. Here's an issue that I think we need to consult northern Ontario on." Rather than going through the regular committee process, having a northern committee with a northern lens that is able to look at that stuff—either they'll call the bureaucrats for it, or maybe they'll travel into places in northern Ontario in order to discuss what's being proposed and—who knows?—maybe even make it better.

I want to speak to one of the points that my colleague made in debate in regard to the Northern Ontario Party, and his sense of northern alienation, and about where people are at when it comes to this: Should northern Ontario separate? Absolutely not. We have gone through that exercise in Canada with the province of Quebec on a couple of occasions. We as a nation understand that Canada is Canada, with all of its parts, the sum of all of its parts together, including Quebec. It made more sense for Quebec to stay within Canada and to find ways of being able to work forward and to accommodate the needs of francophones, who are the majority in that province. So we did that. We have a notwithstanding clause in our Constitution. We have different mechanisms by which the province of Quebec is able to find a way to resolve issues that are important to their people.

1600

All we're asking in northern Ontario is not a notwithstanding clause; we're just saying that there needs to be an ability for northerners to have a say in what goes on. It seems to me that the smart way of doing that is to make sure this Legislature has some sort of a mechanism that allows us to be able to—it's not a question of the northern members being heard; it's a question of the voices of northern Ontario being heard, the people who live from Kenora to Kapuskasing, from Peawanuck and Fort Severn down to—the most southerly community in your riding? Help me out.

Mr. Norm Miller: Port Severn.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Port Severn. We need to be heard. We need to know as northerners that in the end there's going to be somebody listening to what's important to us, to make sure that when we do initiatives here in this Legislature, and the government puts forward programs, they're done in a way that benefits not only just the southern part of this province, but also benefits all of northern Ontario.

I want to comment on one of the issues my friend from Kenora—Rainy River made, and that is the issue of transportation. I know that the member from Algoma—Manitoulin did the same. We don't begrudge the idea of spending money in Toronto to build a better transit system, but God, there is transportation needed in other parts of the province, and northern Ontario would welcome some.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane to wrap up.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to thank everyone who spoke on this motion that I brought forward today, particularly the Minister of Indigenous Relations. What I got from the minister—I'd just like to make clear that the idea of this committee isn't to be the Senate or to hold up things unnecessarily. It would be in between second and third reading, just to make sure that what's proposed by the government—whichever government it is—would actually work, or if there are things we could change to make it work better. It's not to delay. And do you know what? To say that committee structures don't work: This whole place goes by committee structure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The proof is in the pudding.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services: I appreciate his comments. I had one of my best conversations in this Legislature with the minister when you were Minister of Tourism. We were talking about Bill 100, the trails act. We were talking about agriculture in northern Ontario, and I remember you looked on your iPad and we talked about tile drainage.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I saw your farm.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. Those are the kinds of conversations—we're envisioning that the committee could do that for the government, whichever government it is. Because before that day, you didn't realize there was truly that type of agriculture.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I knew agriculture, not dairy.

Mr. John Vanthof: That committee could do that for the government as a whole.

I'm happy for the support. I'm happy that all my colleagues brought up issues that I didn't have time to bring up. There are a multitude of issues in northern Ontario—as there are in the rest of the province, but northern Ontario is a unique place, and anything we can do to make northern Ontario stronger makes all of Ontario stronger.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

LIQUOR STATUTE AMENDMENT ACT
(SALE OF SPIRITS MANUFACTURED
FOR BRAND OWNERS), 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS CONCERNANT L'ALCOOL
(VENTE DE SPIRITUEUX FABRIQUÉS
POUR DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE MARQUE)

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot item number 52, standing in the name of Mr. Hatfield.

Mr. Hatfield has moved second reading of Bill 116, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act and the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, 1996 with respect to authorizations for brand owners to sell spirits manufactured for them in Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh to identify which committee.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to refer it to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed. Congratulations.

KOREAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE CORÉEN

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Cho has moved second reading of Bill 123, An Act to proclaim Korean Heritage Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm turning to the member from Scarborough–Rouge River to identify which committee.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'd like to refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed. Congratulations.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Vanthof has moved private member's notice of motion number 8. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Ms. Forster assumes ballot item number 59 and Ms. Horwath assumes ballot item number 64.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGGREGATE RESOURCES AND MINING MODERNIZATION ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SECTEURS DES RESSOURCES EN AGRÉGATS ET DES MINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 13, 2017, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en agrégats et la Loi sur les mines.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise today to speak to Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act.

Speaker, I'd first like to recognize that the government demonstrated an uncharacteristic amount of flexibility regarding the consideration of the bill, particularly after their proposed condensed schedule for scrutiny and consideration of the legislation.

When Bill 39 was originally referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, only one day of hearings was scheduled. As you would appreciate, Speaker, very short public notice was given, and presentations were limited to five minutes. However, after some discussion with the government members of the committee, it was agreed that Bill 39 would receive the standard amount of time for consideration and scrutiny as all bills normally do in this Legislature.

Unfortunately, because the hearings were held in Toronto, many stakeholders in northern Ontario who would be affected by this bill did not have an opportunity to have their voices heard. That was indeed unfortunate, and coming on the heels of our earlier discussion about the committee, it sheds a more pronounced light on it.

Regardless, I turn now to the main legislative change included in Bill 39, which is an update to the Mining Act that allows prospectors to stake their claim to potential mining sites electronically, rather than requiring them to be physically present on the site.

Now, I'd like to outline one issue that is raised due to this shift to electronic stakes and claims. The information technology infrastructure that the ministry will set up to facilitate this change must be simple enough that it will work properly when using a dial-up Internet connection. The reason for this is because large parts of northern Ontario, as we heard earlier, still do not have access to broadband Internet. There is the potential for northern Ontarians, as a consequence, to be excluded from the claims process.

The government needs to be sure that the new system does not disadvantage the north by making it easier for southern Ontarians, and for that matter, people around the world, to stake a mining claim in the province. One of the presenters to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Tania Poehlman, spoke to this change. Tania is the founder of In Good Standing, which is a company that defines itself as "an experienced team of prospectors, geoscientists and lands managers dedicated to supporting your properties and objectives." Tania agreed that online staking of claims is the future, and that Ontario needs to get on board; however, she had several concerns about how this would impact the livelihood of prospectors who stake claims physically.

Speaker, in conjunction with Tania's concern, the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus had several

other concerns related to Bill 39, and our caucus members proposed amendments, as you would expect, to strengthen the bill.

I understand that because this Liberal government has a majority in the Legislature, they tend to rule by edict and do not accept amendments from the opposition. We've seen this with bills originating from each ministry that have been tabled in this Legislature. But I would hope that the government, and by extension, the Liberal members of provincial Parliament, would not ignore a good idea if it were proposed as an amendment to one of their bills.

1610

What were some of the amendments that we brought forward? One would have resulted in less being left to regulation in Bill 39. As the bill was drafted, the skeletal structure of the bill leaves too much to the discretion of the minister and the ministry. It's clear that no serious effort has been made to make the bill less regulatory and give the members of this Legislature the opportunity to review the changes the minister would impose.

Another would have seen section 62.2 changed to clarify specific instances under which the ministry could request a peer-reviewed study. This amendment's aim was not to prevent the ministry from requesting such a study but, rather, to clearly lay out the conditions by which such a study could be requested. After all, Speaker, we're dealing with water tables and, in some cases, agricultural land, so it's clearly important that these studies be conducted appropriately, and I know that you understand that.

Currently, the ministry can request a peer-reviewed study under certain criteria of circumstances, but it's unable to do so under other circumstances. A singular set of rules for everyone involved in the industry would be certainly advantageous, particularly because these studies do add value and inform the community. One set of rules would also remove any political interference that could occur as a result of desires to expedite or delay a project.

We also wanted to see the government return to annual reporting rather than the ad hoc reporting that had been initially proposed. Thankfully, the government did not make that amendment during Bill 39's consideration by committee members.

We had also suggested, during Bill 39's debate at second reading, that the government should work out a legislative definition as to what constituted adequate consultation with our province's indigenous people. It was simply not sufficient to leave that decision and discretion up to the minister alone. This is primarily because different ministers will be responsible for these consultations in the future, and each would have a different approach to how they would handle those consultations. This is important not just for the pit and quarry projects that require consultation, but also for other projects in other sectors that will require collaboration with communities moving forward.

While the term "adequate consultation" is a term recognized in Canadian law, what's clear is that we need

a legislative definition. Bill 39 has returned from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy without such a definition; it's not there.

However, again, while it's expected that the government would ignore our proposed amendments to Bill 39, we would at least expect—not an unreasonable expectation—that the government members of the committee would provide some substantive discussion during the clause-by-clause review process. Now, Speaker, if you read the transcript of the committee in Hansard, you'll find a resolute lack of contribution put forward by the government members. Both the opposition and the third party members put forward substantive amendments and discussion to improve this bill that's before us this afternoon. My colleagues from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Carleton–Mississippi Mills and Timmins–James Bay did considerable and earnest work to fill several of the gaps that existed in this bill as it was written when the minister introduced it.

What's clear is that despite the government's failed efforts to make the committee's work on Bill 39 a truly collaborative process, this bill still represents some improvements. Had the government co-operated in a more fulsome manner with the members of the official opposition and the third party, this bill could have been improved much, much more. It's crucial that legislation that passes through this Legislature is improved in a collaborative manner, especially when it comes to Bill 39, as it affects a substantial industry in Ontario's economy.

Many of the individuals employed in Ontario's mining sector are highly trained and highly skilled, and Ontario's prospectors would certainly be included in this description. Prospectors in Ontario have a unique set of skills and expertise that could be lost over time if they're not given a reasonable amount of time to transition to a new electronic system. Many geology programs in post-secondary institutions across Ontario are adapting or have already adapted to this shift to electronically based prospecting. But there's a concern that rapidly implemented changes would result in a loss of knowledge and experience, and the potential of academic studies, learning opportunities and physical site visits could be reduced. It would be unfortunate if Ontario's colleges and universities were no longer able to find qualified instructors with on-the-ground experience to teach young geologists because of a rapid, reckless change implemented by this Liberal government.

In debating Bill 39 today, I feel it's incumbent upon us to raise this government's broken promises regarding the Ring of Fire region. We simply cannot talk about mining modernization without asking when this Liberal government will stop making promises and start making real progress on developing the Ring of Fire.

Speaker, you may be asking why that's important, that the government honour its promises and commitments around the Ring of Fire. According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, "The Ring of Fire is the most promising mineral discovery in a generation"—a generation, Speaker. "Ontario cannot afford to miss this eco-

nomic development opportunity.” Furthermore, the chamber also said this: “Over the first 10 years of development, the Ring of Fire will generate” over \$9 billion “in GDP, sustain up to 5,500 jobs annually, and generate \$2 billion in government revenue....” Developments and investments in the Ring of Fire would bring substantial economic benefits to northern Ontario, a region that desperately needs jobs and some long-needed attention from the Liberal government.

To illustrate how beneficial mining developments can be to their local communities, in 2007, the University of Toronto Institute for Policy Analysis, a well-regarded group, conducted a study on behalf of the Ontario Mining Association. It was called Ontario Mining: A Partner in Prosperity Building. The first paragraph of that report reads: “The combined direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of a representative mine are extremely large. In its ‘opening’ or construction phase the mine adds about \$140 million to Ontario GDP and generates almost 2,000 jobs annually. In its production phase, for each year of operation, the mine adds approximately \$280 million to Ontario GDP and increases Ontario’s employment by almost 2,300 at a rate of compensation per employee well above the provincial average.”

Furthermore, the report went on to say, “We find that a large proportion of the economic impacts of a representative mine that stay in Ontario also stay in the local area. In the building phase approximately 1,300 of the total of 2,000 jobs annually generated are local. In the production phase there are 1,500 jobs created annually at the local level out of approximately 2,300 for the province as a whole.” The potential economic benefits are there; there’s no doubt. This government simply has to decide to take action on promises that they’ve already made.

1620

For context, Speaker, the Ring of Fire has been mentioned in every speech from the throne since 2010 and in most of this government’s provincial budgets, with the exception of last week’s budget. Promises have been made, such as, “Your government is fully committed to working with northerners, aboriginal communities and mining partners to fully realize the Ring of Fire’s potential,” in the speech from the throne on March 8, 2010.

“Your government remains fully committed to turning the vast, untapped potential of the Ring of Fire into good, leading-edge northern jobs”—the speech from the throne on November 22, 2011.

“A commitment of \$1 billion to develop strategic transportation infrastructure in the Ring of Fire and unlock the North’s economic growth and jobs potential”—budget 2014. Not one of these promises, Speaker—not one—has been honoured.

Consequently, the mining sector in this province is left in a holding pattern by this Liberal government. This is a robust sector that heavily contributes to the economic growth of Ontario, particularly in northern Ontario communities. The mining sector accounts for more than

100,000 jobs: 77,000 are directly employed, and a further 25,000 are employed in mining services and equipment. These are high-paying and safe jobs. The average weekly wage in the mining sector is 60% higher than the average industrial wage in Ontario.

I raise this because the government must carefully consider any proposed changes to a sector that can affect the day-to-day lives of so many Ontarians. Furthermore, the government is going to have to work with mining companies to find new roles and new income for those traditional prospectors as they make the transition to electronically based claims. As I stated earlier, there needs to be a larger amount of transition time to effect that—to truly effect that.

In closing, while I agree that the idea of modernizing the process of staking a claim is sound, I’m deeply concerned about how this government is going to implement this policy and its potential effects. Speaker, you know that the best policies are developed from a collaborative basis to begin. That collaborative basis starts with a broad engagement with members in this Legislature from northern Ontario, as we heard earlier. I think that would allow us to arrive at the type of outcome that we’ve been striving to arrive at, both in the discussions that took place in the standing committee and in earlier statements that we’ve heard from some of the members from northern Ontario overall.

Taken together, my hope would be that we continue to have a dialogue on the proposed legislation before us, Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources Act, and take into account very clearly the voices that we continue to hear from northern Ontario, but more particularly, the members in this Legislature from northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sam Oosterhoff): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s always an honour to be able to stand in the House. I’d like to make some comments on the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. One of the issues we have with this is that it should be two pieces of legislation. Mining is crucial to the province and crucial to northern Ontario, but it’s a whole different animal than aggregate resources.

What makes it even more difficult to understand this as one act is that the Aggregate Resources Act doesn’t apply to huge swaths of northern Ontario. You’ve got an act where part of it applies to the north and part of it doesn’t, mixed with an act that is probably almost wholly northern Ontario. That’s one of the reasons why this act is very problematic.

I’d also like to take just a minute to talk about a local issue. The Aggregate Resources Act doesn’t apply in northern Ontario. We have some townships in my riding of Timiskaming—Cochrane. One township is Coleman township, and the Temiskaming Municipal Association is pushing very hard to get it to apply, because the Temiskaming area looks just like southern Ontario, with lots of gravel pits and lots of trucks pounding—I was going to say something unparliamentary, but pounding the roads. And do you know what? Those townships need some extra money to actually complete that infrastructure. But

because the Aggregate Resources Act doesn't apply in northern Ontario—and probably for vast swaths of northern Ontario, it doesn't make a difference. But for this part, it does.

Actually, since we've just discussed this this afternoon, this would be a good test case for the northern committee to look at—what should apply where—because the Aggregate Resources Act should apply in parts of northern Ontario, but certainly these two acts should not be put together as one. It just does not make sense, Speaker.

Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sam Oosterhoff): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. It's important that we move on this—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sam Oosterhoff): Order.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's important that we move on this. I mean, we see so many issues when it comes to resources. I think my colleague talked about the Ring of Fire, which is really Ontario's oil sands project. It's been years and years and years, and still no action by this government on the Ring of Fire. And now we see that this year it's even dropped from the budget.

It becomes, I guess, critical that we put some regulations in place, some rules in place, so that actually we can get some work done and some people working. I think this government has lost its way. It is forgetting that there are many, many people, especially our youth, who are out looking for a job.

My own son is out in Vancouver. After completing his engineering degree, he came back from working in Alberta at the time, came back for a period of time and found friends still working in Toronto in jobs such as waitressing. The point was, he couldn't find a job in the engineering field. In Ontario, that used to be a guaranteed spot, but it is no longer a guaranteed job. It's because we've got an economy that's failing, especially, the young people. We've got an economy that is failing all ages in this province. We see a massive debt that's not disappearing. I think it's time that we see through this budget—an additional, what, \$10 billion in what this government calls a balanced budget? It's just time to move on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sam Oosterhoff): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you in the chair. It's a pleasure, as well, to speak to this Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. I'm going to have a fair bit of time to speak later, so I'll just cover this very quickly here now.

I want to commend my colleague and friend the member from Dufferin–Caledon, MPP Sylvia Jones, for championing the increased use of recycled aggregates. She was very much involved in the committee. She did a lot of work. Back in 2014, she introduced Bill 56 to guarantee that we recycle more and extract less by

allowing contractors to use recycled aggregates when bidding on construction projects paid for with public money.

It seems to me it makes sense. Yes, we have lots of natural resources. Particularly in an area like Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, there are lots of natural resources. However, why would we not take every opportunity we can to recycle already-used materials when they are there? It's a cheaper way to do it. It typically is a good use of that material. You obviously know that it works if it has already been used on a highway and they can recycle it. It takes the burden off of our natural resources so that we can defer the use of those, and the extraction.

More importantly, her bill also aimed to divert at least three million tonnes of recycled aggregate from stockpiles to construction and refurbishment projects—again, a great idea by her. And she had widespread support from the Ontario Road Builders' Association, Aggregate Recycling Ontario, the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, the Ready Mixed Concrete Association of Ontario, the Ontario Hot Mix Producers Association, the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association and many others.

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Mr. Speaker, I look forward to actually spending a fair bit of time in my 20 minutes to explore various ideas. I'm going to talk a lot about the great things happening in my riding in the area of aggregates. It's a huge component—228 construction cranes at one point were in this city, building. Where do they believe all of that comes from if it's not the aggregates from our pits and quarries in places like Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and certainly northern Ontario where a lot of those aggregates come from?

I look forward to more time at that point, Mr. Speaker, and again it's a pleasure to see you in the chair, sir.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sam Oosterhoff): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, it's good to see you in the chair there; I don't know whether that's the first time or not. I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. I did have a chance to speak at length to this bill in the leadoff that I shared with my colleague, but I wanted to congratulate the member from Whitby–Oshawa on his speech. He focused quite a bit on the mining part of the bill, because, really, there are two parts to the bill—the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act—and talked about how we're changing from actual on-the-ground staking to a system of electronic staking, and he raised concerns with traditional prospectors which I think are very valid.

He also went on at length about the value of mining to the province of Ontario—the lack of action on the Ring of Fire, as was mentioned. It has always been a big part of budgets and throne speeches, but for some reason, there was no mention of it this year in the budget. In fact, the word "northern" appears once in this year's 50-minute budget speech. Obviously there's concern: What

happened to the \$1-billion commitment for the Ring of Fire? I've asked probably 12 times in the Legislature, asking the government to show something, some real achievement, something happening physically on the ground. I've yet to have a positive response to that question that I've asked many times.

I want to congratulate the member from Whitby-Oshawa on bringing up all the many benefits that we see from developing mining and, in particular, benefits for the indigenous communities. If we ever could get the Ring of Fire developed, those communities would be the ones that would benefit most. Mining is the biggest employer of indigenous people of any industry. Over 10% of the workforce is indigenous in the mining sector for those great-paying jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sam Oosterhoff): Returning to the member, I recognize the member for Whitby-Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker. It's really good to see you in the chair. I would probably suspect that you're the youngest MPP ever to occupy that chair.

Mr. Norm Miller: He set another record, unless he was one of the pages.

Mr. Lorne Coe: You have.

I appreciate the comments that have been provided from the members from Timiskaming-Cochrane, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, Bruce-Grey Owen Sound and Parry Sound-Muskoka. All, taken together, reinforce some of the key message points that I was trying to convey within my comments.

Underscoring all of those comments is that the Liberal government has really an abysmal track record on rolling out electronic systems. You only need to look as far as eHealth and SAMS. We can't afford another setback, particularly in our mining sector, which is so vulnerable. In my comments, I talked about the type of job creation that the mining sector brings, but this bill would bring forward a system that, in our view, further complicates the staking process that has worked in this province for well over 100 years.

Going forward, my hope would be that an ongoing dialogue ensues. I'm looking forward to the other remarks that are scheduled here today. But I think that's only a start. As I said in my remarks, we also need to continue to consult, and consult robustly, with the members in this Legislature from northern Ontario in all aspects of Bill 39 because, at the end of the day, I think we'll have the legislation that will provide the type of framework to help us go forward and continue to strengthen the mining sector.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sam Oosterhoff): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It is nice to see the younger generation taking over the Speaker's job—not that we want to replace the current Speaker today, but there are other Speakers throughout the week we might consider. I won't name names. I don't think he's here.

It is an honour to rise and speak to Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act.

Those are two important areas of our economy that really have a chance to be game-changers.

If I look at the Ring of Fire, I've heard this government talk about—until just recently, of course—over and over again, how that was going to change the economy around; how we would see the benefits of the huge employment opportunities, the huge addition to our economy, something that rivals Alberta's oil sands. Just think of the amount of money that added to their economy.

As we look at the last bit of the recession that really impacted Alberta, it has actually allowed Ontario to come above the national average for employment, because they've dragged down the economy so much in their loss of jobs.

Of course, I have a lot of friends who worked out there—actually, my son worked out there—and jobs have left. So you think that if we had a place for them back here, people would be working again in northern Ontario and the Ring of Fire. We are yet to give any direction as to transportation routes or the utility corridors in the north, and it's hard to believe that after this many years we don't have an answer from the government.

I guess in some ways it might have been embarrassing, because now they've dropped it from their discussions completely. We don't see any money in the budget this year for it. A billion dollars was in there for years. Maybe that was required to balance the budget. The money they had committed to spending on the Ring of Fire is now gone—just like the mining companies that spent years up there prospecting and looking for the opportunity to invest in Ontario. Many of them invested, and then they just picked up their stakes, quite literally, and left, because they weren't getting the requirements or the permits that are required by any government to make this project happen. It's unfortunate.

I always like to talk about my Scottish heritage. Back in Glengarry county—

Mr. Bill Walker: A proud Scot.

Mr. Jim McDonell: A proud Scot.

There are many stories I'd hear my parents talk about. The farms would get smaller, to the point that people would have to leave the farms and look for other jobs. Many of them went up north, to northern Ontario, into the mines. They were good jobs back then. They brought back money that allowed many of the farms that would have been lost to be retained by the families. Important dollars came back to eastern Ontario from places like Timmins and Thunder Bay. As well, at that time, forestry was a big industry. It was labour-intensive and required a lot of muscle power. The settlers came across looking for places to work and ways of bringing money back to their families. The mining industry was a great spot. Even during the Great Depression, they were seeing cheques coming out of Timmins that would actually be pretty good by today's standards, let alone back in the Depression, when so many people were looking for food, let alone a good job.

Those are the benefits that we are passing up by not developing our mining industry. I'm not quite sure why

the severe turnaround in this government's direction—why have they given up on the Ring of Fire? We haven't heard anything about it.

We talk about the impact of jobs. When I graduated from university, we were coming out of a bit of a downturn. The federal Liberal government had put in wage and price controls, and that had held back the economy, so there were no jobs for the graduates of 1974-75. But coming into 1977, the restrictions were removed, and there was an abundance of jobs.

Friends of mine that had wanted to—at that time, you could graduate from university and get unemployment insurance, actually, if you couldn't get a job. A lot of them had counted on having some money come in over the summertime. But you could only turn down two jobs in your field. Many of my friends who had counted on that were actually working oddball jobs because they had permanent jobs starting in September. But there was so much employment and they didn't have the money, without the social benefits, so they actually had to go to work temporarily in places that they hadn't counted on.

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That just goes to show, when you've got an economy that's flowing, you're doing things right—the Big Blue Machine at the time. They didn't build a lot of Taj Mahals. Our bridges—we built many bridges. We built affordable infrastructure. The aggregate of the day went to many uses. Today, we see grandiose projects like the bridge in Windsor. We see the bridge up in northern Ontario. The same son who is actually working now out in Vancouver, looking for a job—it collapsed just the day after he went over, a bridge that was open about 30 or 40 days. If you see pictures of it, it stands out for 50 or 60 miles away. It's a huge infrastructure project that really makes you wonder: Could we not just have built three or four of those bridges around the province and got something out of our money?

So I think when we're looking at—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Stop the clock. I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I want to apologize to the speaker, but I have somebody very special in the gallery. I told her I hang out with nice people, so I brought her here for private members' business, as opposed to question period. I would like you all to welcome my wife, Janice Flynn, to Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I apologize to the member again; I didn't mean to interrupt.

Mr. Jim McDonell: That's not a problem. I know that will probably solve a lot of issues tonight, if it's anything like at home.

So we're looking at a different time, a time, I think, when we built infrastructure, we built practical infrastructure, and we built more of it. It had a bigger impact. We're looking today around the province, and, you know, we hear the province—they guarantee, in 10 years, we'll have \$100 billion worth of infrastructure. Then, in

the next budget, it's, "Well, in 12 years, we'll have \$120 billion." Now it's, "In 13 years, we'll have \$140 billion." But the key is, they're not spending it right now. They're just extending the time frame they can spend it in, because the money is short.

We have to start looking at practicality and affordability. When we build something, we need the resources for that. Part of that is the money that would come out of the mining industry that has been stalled now for more than 10 years—I mean, a study done originally back in 2010? You're getting to almost another decade, and we're still waiting for some meaningful changes that would allow the largest mining operation probably in the world to proceed. Most governments would be jumping at this, but we don't seem to see this happening. I think that that's something we absolutely need to get going. We need to get it right. We need to look at the restrictions: Are they fair? Are they restrictions we're putting in place to protect the environment while encouraging development? I think there's a saw-off here.

I've heard, just in the last couple of couple of weeks, a couple of times, people talking at home about the Seaway project. They said, "Would you be able to do a project like the Seaway today? Would you be able to build the 401 today?" The highway went through fairly quickly. The Seaway, a huge project that benefited the eastern part of this continent and, I would say, the world by lowering prices and allowing material to get out, has benefited many, many people, with very few environmental impacts. Today, those projects would almost be impossible.

We want to make sure that we weigh the costs to the environment with the costs to the economy. Mining is an important element of that and of bringing forth new jobs in the future, that's for sure.

We talk about the aggregate part of this. I know our member from Dufferin-Caledon had an amendment to allow that we don't count the recycled material in the tonnage. You think of the impact of that amendment if it had gone through. We would be encouraging the reuse of material for the most part, coming out of the municipal world, of what was turning into a very expensive landfill site, as they all are today.

I think when I first got on council, we were looking at a quick project—a couple of hundred thousand dollars to expand our landfill. It took about six years and \$5 million to get it finally approved, in the same location, of course—very expensive. Today, I see it filled by things that could be recycled in the form of aggregate: concrete, asphalt. These are things that shouldn't be in landfills, but there's no place to put them. If we encouraged them, it would no longer be cheaper just to take it out of the ground. There's a real impact of that.

It's funny, a bit of a story here: When they were redoing a 401 project around home, of course, they were grinding off the asphalt and the ministry was looking for a home for it. The park near Cornwall township laid it on our granular road. That recycled asphalt was almost as good as a paved road—certainly as good or better than a surface-treated road. It just goes to show you the value of

these recycled products. Now, when the ministry is trying to get rid of that material, it never gets to the township because it always gets somewhere first. I think too many people realized the value of this product by seeing how it worked on this road. It's a loss to the municipalities, but it certainly is a loss if we don't encourage it. If you're encouraging road projects and you don't allow for the use of these recycled products—as I say, these products can be of very high quality for many of the uses in a road base.

Aggregates are a finite resource. We are blessed in Ontario with more than our fair share. There are many parts of the world that really have nothing. If we continually go on and waste products, bury our used products that could be recycled, it will shorten the time frame. It will use up our landfills, which are another finite resource, and it's an issue for this province that we should be very worried about, and I don't see that here.

I know that in our own townships in South Glengarry and in the county system of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, the recycled granules were a huge project every year. One of our biggest road projects was the continued reapplication of granules on our roads just to keep up with keeping them at a bare minimum, really—because we're talking about gravel roads here, what many people would call the lower end of the spectrum. But it was a material you just kept putting on. Really, within a year, the impact was gone. It had to be re-applied.

It shows the importance of this resource and it shows the importance of us getting it right with getting this material. I'm telling you, on some of the roads we would get complaints; we'd go out and we'd see where there hadn't been enough of the aggregate put on—it was very hard to drive on the road at any speed over 10 kilometres an hour, literally, as crazy as that seems. That just shows that when this resource is gone—even our asphalt requires huge amounts of aggregate. It is a material that needs to be captured, recycled and protected, and also, any resources we have still in the ground: identify them and protect them for future use. I look at the pages here. Hopefully they have a long life in front of them. We don't want to see this generation squandering resources that could go on for generation after generation.

We had the road builders' group here a couple of days ago and we were talking about a new application. They were looking at a new road surface that had a lot of—a group came to our council and they were going to do it for free because it was looking like such an improvement in technology that we'd be using this everywhere. Of course, if you like the word "free," it was a road that maybe wasn't that well used, but it was a road with a quarry on it. It was a huge problem for us because of the dust and everything that went along with it. We approved it, and they went away and we never heard anything else about it. They never came back to actually follow through with the project.

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The road builders up here had heard of the same product about seven or eight years ago. Whatever happened, I

guess it didn't pan out, because there's nowhere in Ontario where they're actually using this product.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Anyway, it speaks about the need for technology, and we're not seeing it. There are many more years in front of us that we'll be using asphalt and the various products that we've been using for generations. It's important, with nothing new on the horizon, that we look at taking steps to protect what we have here. Again, I think that just for our youth—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Stop the clock. The Minister of Children and Youth Services. Thank you.

I return to the member for his presentation.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker.

Along with some of our issues here, the government continues to boast about its infrastructure plan, but we see an industry that's worth—what?—\$1.5 billion in GDP to the province every year and directs over 16,000 people in Ontario. Why are we failing this industry? This is a huge potential to put a lot of our people to work. As a member from my side here talked about many times, the best therapy for somebody is a good job, and road-building jobs are good jobs; they're high-paying jobs. But they do depend on our resources; they do depend on good aggregate resources. We can't do something that will not keep those resources abundant for the years to come.

Between this and the Mining Act—we heard about the bill this afternoon from the northern members. Obviously, legislation comes from this group because they're concerned about what they see happening here. Of course, sometimes when you see nothing happening, that is what's concerning. I've heard the third party many times talk about the Ring of Fire, concerned about—we used to talk about it in the budget, and of course they had some concerns about it, but now since it has been dropped from the budget, the biggest concern is that it's gone.

It's not gone. I think we have to make some changes, and I guess maybe it might be a change in government that's required to get the confidence from these large corporations back and actually see an Ontario that has a future, and a future in mining. We used to be the number one mining jurisdiction in the world. If you have the opportunity to go down to the mining convention we have in town, it uses up every hotel in Toronto and the GTA, but that's declining because we're losing our impact on the industry.

Ontario and Canada are a safe place to invest. It's considered a free country. There are a lot of benefits to coming to and spending your money in Canada, but more and more corporations are looking at us and they're worried about coming to Ontario and losing their money. That's what we're seeing with some of these companies who have been in the Ring of Fire. They've come, they've invested and they've written off their losses.

They've sold their developments. That's a sad state of affairs when you consider just what we used to offer to the private investor. There used to be a hope of coming up here and being able to—if you worked hard and played by the rules, you'd succeed in Ontario. Now, that's not the same. That's unfortunate, because those people, those entrepreneurs who came through, provided jobs for our children and jobs for our grandparents.

Now people are working longer because it's getting tougher and tougher under this government to make a living. People are working longer, but it's tough to work when you don't have a job. I heard today that a couple of the ex-members who used to be in this Legislature are experiencing that first-hand, where not too many years ago if you worked as an MPP, getting a job outside the Legislature wouldn't have been too hard a thing to do, especially with an education. But today, it's not that way. There's so much competition looking for work.

Our youth unemployment is double what the average employment is. From the budget, we see that it's only getting worse. We see the government's budget figures for unemployment rising; we see the job growth declining by a third over the next few years. Those are big drops. When you think of a third, we're not talking about a province here that's flush right now. Luckily, we have the nuclear refurbishments that are using up a lot of skilled trades. That's already had an impact, but still, with that included, we're looking at losing much of the job growth that this province has always been known for.

I see my time is running out, so thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the member for Niagara South—Glanbrook.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Niagara West—Glanbrook. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and it's a pleasure to stand in this chair and speak to the modernizing mining act.

I had the chance a couple of weeks ago to speak to this piece of legislation in more depth. I spoke for 20 minutes about this piece of legislation and the impact it will have on the aggregate sector and on quarries in southern Ontario, and about the need in northern Ontario also.

I want to thank the member for his speech, which really did address, especially near the end, a very important role that I feel, unfortunately, this piece of legislation does not properly encapsulate and doesn't recognize. The member is right: Youth unemployment numbers here in Ontario are abysmal. I believe, according to YES, Youth Employment Services, it's 22%. I'm surprised that this government hasn't recognized the need to get people, especially young people, back to work. To get young people into the workforce and get them involved in being productive, contributing members of our society is very fundamental.

This piece of legislation has the opportunity to in fact make it easier to increase investment in Ontario's prospecting and mining sectors, which would lead to the creation of good, well-paying jobs. But unfortunately, as

the member brought up and mentioned, with a lack of investment in the Ring of Fire, with this bill that seems to be making it more complicated by adding uncertainty and red tape to the mining sector, it's not going to help those young people who are looking for jobs, who are coming out of university, such as many of my peers, and hope to get into one of these skilled trades or hope to participate in the mining sector. I hope that the government will consider some of our recommendations at committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 39 once again, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. I know that my colleague from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry just spoke for 20 minutes on two features of the act. But I wanted to come back to the shift to electronic stakes and claims and emphasize the importance of the information technology infrastructure that the ministry sets up to facilitate that change, make sure that it's working properly and it uses a dial-up Internet connection.

Earlier this afternoon, Speaker, the member from Algoma—Manitoulin spoke about some of the challenges in northern Ontario as they related to broadband Internet in particular. The reason for that is because a large part of northern Ontario doesn't have access and they would be in effect excluded from the claims process. So taken together, it's really important that the government needs to be sure the new system, the new proposed system, does not disadvantage the north by making it easier for southern Ontarians—and, for that matter, for people around the world—to stake a mining claim in the province to the detriment of those living in northern Ontario.

I thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to do the two-minute hit on this again, and to re-emphasize a key aspect of importance related to the Mining Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

1700

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to this again. I'm going to echo a little bit my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka. The Ring of Fire, which he has asked about in here since virtually the day I got here—it comes out almost all the time as an announcement: "This is going to be the biggest thing coming at you. We're working on it. We're planning it. We have it." Yet this year in the budget, conspicuously, not a word about the Ring of Fire in there. So that was a \$1-billion commitment that I think they committed to about five times since I've been here, Madam Speaker. It made you think they were totally going full bore, and yet the company that was originally going to invest has walked away: Cliffs Natural Resources. When a company that large says, "We've had enough," obviously the government isn't moving forward. That has a huge impact not only on our economy but on workers and our First Nations communities who would certainly benefit from this. I'm going to talk about that more in my further comments a little bit later.

There are a number of things since this Aggregate Resources Act has been reviewed by the general government committee, which studied it back in 2012-13. There are concerns in regard to the current practice of including recycled aggregate in the approved extraction tonnage permitted at a site. The recommendation from the industry in the consultation was that extraction tonnage should apply only to new aggregates. This means that the levies are increased. There's no guarantee that the additional fees will go to municipalities where the pits and quarries are located.

Madam Speaker, it only makes sense that when they're coming from there, there's going to be need for some money to go back in to rehabilitate those, and the roads that are going to be impacted by moving this back and forth. That's something we hear from our municipalities. They want to make sure that they are not going to be negatively impacted. Obviously they want those quarries to move forward because it's good, gainful employment, it's taxation and it has a relatively positive impact on the economy all around.

We want to make sure that we also talk about some of the consultation requirements. I have two quarries in my backyard—and I'm running out of time, so I'll speak to those in my next comment in reply.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have another opportunity to speak to Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act, and to comment on the speech by the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. He talked at length about the Ring of Fire, so I want to talk briefly about that.

I've brought it up many, many times, asking about seeing some real progress, something to show something actually happening on the ground on this project. I think it's only fair, because if you look back at some of the press releases over the years—I still remember one that was done by one of the prior Ministers of Northern Development and Mines, Mr. Bartolucci, saying that thousands of jobs were coming to northern Ontario. It sounded like the mine was about to open. Now, years later, we've seen no virtual progress on the ground on this project, and as has been pointed out, the \$1 billion that used to be talked about and in the budget and mentioned in the budget was not mentioned at all this year.

The current minister who's filling in as Minister of Northern Development and Mines responded to a question just a couple of days ago, and in his response he did say something to the—I think his terminology was "not allocated." I'm not quite sure what "not allocated" means in referring to that \$1 billion, but I think the government needs to make it very clear where the \$1 billion is and explain whether it has disappeared, for those companies—it's mainly Noront that's the main company still involved in the area.

As was mentioned by other members, the issue on the aggregate side about using recycled material is one that

I'm disappointed that the government didn't respond to our amendments on to promote more recycled material, because I believe that is a positive thing for the environment, and I don't understand why the government would not have listened to that—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

I return to the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry to wrap up.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to hear the comments made by the members from Niagara West-Glanbrook, Whitby-Oshawa, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and Parry Sound-Muskoka.

It's interesting that the member from Parry Sound talked about the disappearance of the \$1 billion. I guess that's something we've seen from this government too often; it's just another \$1 billion. But it's \$1 billion that was in the budget for years. All of sudden, it's "not allocated," I guess is the official word. It has disappeared. If we look back, is that a way of re-discussing what the government called our most important project going forward? Now it has just disappeared and it has been swallowed up by something else.

The member from Niagara talked about youth unemployment—double what the average is. Of course, I look at people my son's age. My daughter is looking for part-time work. That's the best they can get these days, if they can get that—working two or three jobs. It's unfortunate, because that's not the way it used to be here.

I see projects—and I go back to one outside of my riding. It went through my riding into North Glengarry. We spent \$3 million on engineering on a project that I have a feeling the government has no intention of funding. And \$3 million of engineering could have gone to many projects that we were going to build. You can't be doing these things just to make somebody go away. I think sometimes that's what we do, and it's not an efficient use of capital. It's a waste of capital. That \$3 million could have done a lot of important projects. I hear the same municipalities talking today about needing money, and here we've used—well, it was \$3 million, but it was closer to \$4 million, on a project that will never see the light of day. I think that's too bad—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: It is my pleasure to rise today and speak on Bill 39. Before I get into my concerns with this bill, I would like to acknowledge my colleagues from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Prince Edward-Hastings, Carleton-Mississippi Mills and Timmins-James Bay for all of their hard work and remarks on this bill. Your constituents are lucky to have representatives like you who are willing to put partisanship aside for the betterment of the province.

It has been seven long years since the government first studied the state of Ontario's aggregate resource laws, developing a laundry list of recommendations that remove red tape and unnecessary regulations. With each new budget and Minister of Natural Resources, we expected that something would eventually get done. Yet,

after years of waiting, we have been given a bill packed with unnecessary regulations and no consideration for the future of this important resource.

My colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings put it best when he said that complying with the law should be simple and transparent. The more regulations in place, the harder it will be for smaller companies to make sure that they are in compliance.

As much as the members of the government love the colour red, more red tape doesn't make better policy; quite frankly, it does the opposite. In simple terms, small businesses plus red tape equals higher operating costs, forcing family-owned companies to sell or close up shop. Fewer companies will mean less competition and higher prices for projects, not to mention the lower wages that will be paid to workers.

Certain regulations I agree with. Those related to agricultural lands and water tables are obviously very important, and I firmly believe they are worthy of a great deal of caution and consideration. But that is not what my colleagues and I are concerned about. What we are concerned with is this government's willingness to push through this bill as quickly as possible, without as much as a single visit to any of Ontario's 444 municipalities to hear their views on this matter, let alone those communities just over an hour away from this building who depend on infrastructure projects as a primary source of income.

Ontario is much, much bigger than Toronto. The voices of other communities do matter too.

1710

With all the time and money the government has spent touting their grand plans for infrastructure, I think any reasonable person would expect that the ministry would at least attempt to meet with those affected by their policies. But rather than taking the hour-and-a-bit drive outside of Queen's Park and meeting with these groups, the government has decided that a brief deputation and a handful of questions is enough to move forward with this proposal. Some \$160 billion in spending should be more than enough to justify even one hour of driving.

As I and many others have said before, this bill should not come down to partisanship. No one has yet found a better alternative to aggregate that would improve the building of our roads and bridges. We continue to believe in a close-to-market policy with aggregate production, to limit our emissions.

My colleagues on the justice committee were even willing to work with the government to arrive at the best solution for Ontario, rather than oppose this bill outright. Yet here I stand, repeating the words of my colleagues: Ontario needs less red tape and more consultation.

The GTA and surrounding communities are not the only groups that have suffered from a lack of consultation. While the aggregate industry is based largely in the southern part of Ontario, our northern communities depend heavily on mining, which happens to be the second major area of concern within this bill.

The proposed updates to the Mining Act will give prospectors the ability to stake their claims electronically,

rather than having to go out into the bush. While this tried-and-true tradition of the north has served Ontario's prospectors well for generations, it has become clear that electronic staking is the future.

But just because this is the future, however, does not mean we should not have our concerns. Tania Poehlman, the founder of In Good Standing and one of the individuals who presented to the justice policy committee about this bill, warned my colleagues of the potential concerns of transferring physical mapping to an electronic system. For instance, improper transferring of information could result in some stakeholders acquiring an unknown liability or risk that would have been noticed with the traditional staking system. If hazards are therefore not mapped properly, our prospectors cannot make the same educated decisions about their claims that they do today.

The government has a single chance to set this program up right. Transferring all existing claims onto the online system cannot be a process of trial and error.

The transfers are not the only potential problem with this system. While the Ontario Prospectors Association is concerned about how current and future stakes will be mapped in the system, the ability to access electronic claims is a major concern. Large parts of northern Ontario are still not on a broadband network. Many communities, especially smaller ones, still rely on dial-up Internet access in order to get online. Because of this, the website must be simple enough that northern citizens can still access the website and stake their claim without the need for high-speed Internet.

I'd like to quote a short excerpt of the January edition of the OPA newsletter: "Speaking of Internet, most prospectors live in rural areas where Internet is unpredictably slow or non-existent. Instead of competing with other claim-stakers and prospectors for ground, now prospectors will be competing with anyone in the world with a computer, or as many people as a mining company decides to hire to stake a claim."

Moving forward, we must remember that not all communities in Ontario face the same challenges. A policy that may work for southern Ontario may need a slightly different approach to accommodate the north. When it comes to converting staking to a primarily electronic format, I urge the government to consider these challenges so we may respond appropriately. The ability for an Ontario business to stake their claim cannot come down to the speed of their Internet connection.

It is no secret that the Ontario mining industry accounts for over 100,000 jobs, over three quarters of which are related to the fabrication and processing of minerals, with the remainder focused on services and equipment.

Mining not only happens to be the single largest private sector employer of indigenous Canadians, but Ontario is one of the safest areas to mine in the world. Legislation around our mines has been updated constantly, ensuring the safety and well-being of those in the mining sector while continuing to be a staple of Ontario's north.

As we have already done many times, I believe we need to revisit and improve the current regulations surrounding our mining industry, namely, those concerned with air movement and ventilation in mines.

Madam Speaker, I ask you to consider Goldcorp's all-electric gold mine, set to open in Chapleau. Unlike traditional mines, all-electric mines do not emit the same level of diesel fumes of traditional mining. Because of this, Ontario's current ventilation regulations do not make sense. I agree with the recommendations of Goldcorp that regulating the air quality rather than air movement is a far more fitting regulation in modern mining.

As should be the case for all our regulations, companies should be able to meet a goal in the method of their own choosing rather than being prescribed a certain method and having to deal with all kinds of red tape.

Finally, I'd like to discuss the Ring of Fire. It is impossible to talk about northern mining and modernization without discussing the government's lack of progress in developing the Ring of Fire. The government has made countless promises, including references in every throne speech since 2010—

Ms. Cindy Forster: No money in the budget.

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Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: You're right—to their commitment to the Ring of Fire, but have yet to make any substantial progress in that area.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has called the Ring of Fire "the most promising mineral discovery in a generation," saying further that "Ontario cannot afford to miss this economic development opportunity." According to Chamber of Commerce statistics, the first 10 years of development in the Ring of Fire will produce \$9.4 billion in GDP—I will repeat: The Ring of Fire will produce \$9.4 billion in GDP—5,500 jobs annually, and \$2 billion in government revenue. Why would you regret the Ring of Fire? And yet, there is no mention in budget 2017 of this important development project. We should ask the Minister of Finance: How come?

It should come as no surprise that the Chamber of Commerce gave the province a very disappointing grade when it comes to development of this region, with its highest grade being a B-, along with a handful of Fs and Cs. This is the report card from the chamber of commerce. What should be a top priority for Ontario has fallen short of the government's promises for the Ring of Fire. Maybe we should demand that the government rewrite the budget.

Madam Speaker, I would like to remind you that back when we had a PC government, Ontario was number one in mining worldwide. Today we are 18th, having dropped nine spots since the government took power in 2003, lagging behind other parts of Canada such as Manitoba at number two, Quebec at number six, the Yukon at number 15, and Newfoundland and Labrador at number 16. Ontario can do more and needs to do more for our mines in the north if we hope to improve this standing. This includes developing the Ring of Fire.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker—maybe I should just repeat one paragraph before I come to the conclusion.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has called the Ring of Fire "the most promising mineral discovery in a generation," saying further that "Ontario cannot afford to miss this economic development opportunity." It's so sad to get this kind of report. According to Chamber of Commerce statistics, the first 10 years of development in the Ring of Fire will produce \$9.4 billion in GDP, 5,500 jobs annually, and \$2 billion in government revenue. What happened to our budget? There's no mention in budget 2017 of this important development project.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I'd like to point once more to the lack of consultations and excess of red tape within Bill 39. Ontario needs legislation that is consistent with the wants and needs of its citizens, Ontarians, and that includes the reduction of unnecessary regulations and productive changes to our laws that do not come at the expense of the livelihoods of Ontarians. Ontario cannot afford for this bill to become yet another rushed mess that leaves its citizens no better off than before. I hope we can avoid that this time around.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Once again today, on this beautiful Thursday, it's a pleasure to be able to stand up and respond to the debate of my friend and colleague the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, who as always does an excellent job of articulating the concerns of his constituents and also the very valid concerns that we have on this side of the House with some aspects of this bill, Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act.

I did want to touch on one thing that he mentioned, specifically regarding communication, and regarding also the importance of ensuring that these permits are able to be received through dial-up, because not every place in our province, of course—the north and also rural areas, unfortunately, do not have broadband access in many of these areas. It would be detrimental to business owners and it would be detrimental to the local economy if they were unable to access these due to an exclusive use of only broadband or high-speed. I think we do need to ensure that we have the ability to connect also through dial-up Internet services.

But I did want to speak very briefly about how that lack of access for many in rural areas is hugely detrimental to small business owners and to those who are trying to create their own businesses, who are trying to invest in Ontario and trying to build up their own lives with their entrepreneurial spirit and the opportunity that they have in our free-market society. It does concern me that there is that lack of connectivity. I think when we are speaking about this dial-up situation and about the connectivity between mine owners or aggregate owners, we also should be looking at what we can do here in this House and across government, and also on the government benches, what they can be doing to increase access for members to—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again, it's a pleasure to speak to this. Madam Speaker, in my five and a half years here, I've actually had two quarry applications that I've worked through the process of, or am trying to work through it. Both of them have been over 10 years, so a long period of time for that person who owns the quarry to get through a lot of expense, a lot of investment that they're making, with no real determination of where they will get to and how clear.

One of the things we want to see, Madam Speaker, when we're doing a review like this is how we can provide more certainty, more clarity for all parties, in fact. When I read some of the parts of the suggested changes, the minister's discretion makes me nervous, and I'm going to quote in here: "The minister will consider whether adequate consultation ... has been carried out" before making decisions regarding licences or permits if those licences or permits affect established or credibly asserted aboriginal treaty rights. What constitutes "adequate consultation" is not defined in the legislation and is left to ministerial discretion. Given the present climate, this may be an opportunity to define it.

Madam Speaker, it has to be defined, for all parties. I think the First Nations are better served if they know exactly what that means. Certainly, the proponent who is trying to develop the quarry needs to understand that. You can't keep changing the goal marks, and that's what has happened with me. It adds extra expense to the proponent trying to do that. It adds uncertainty. It prohibits jobs coming on the scene. Again, it's 10 years with no real knowledge.

I have one right now where the actual minister has signed a permit, and yet they are physically not able to go and carry out the extraction at this point. This developer or this proponent who owns the land—very small; it's not some big conglomerate. It's a person in my backyard who actually has invested over 10 years and wants to create more jobs, wants to do the right thing, and yet now the yard mark has changed again.

So when I see "discretion of a minister", for one person to have that much power, it should all be clear; it should be fair. All parties should be consulted and agree that these are the terms and conditions. That way, everybody wins.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to commend the member from Scarborough–Rouge River on the outstanding job he did in discussing the legislation before us today on third reading, and in particular the narrative that he brought forward for discussion on the Ring of Fire, because what's very clear is that the developments and investments in the Ring of Fire would bring substantial economic benefits to northern Ontario. I think we all strive to do that. It's a region that desperately needs jobs—we know that—and some long-needed attention from the current government, because there's nothing in

the budget, absolutely nothing in the Ontario budget related to the Ring of Fire.

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But let's turn for a moment to the aggregates discussion as well and bring our focus back to that. The bill changes the act to allow the minister to require peer review of technical studies at the cost of the applicant. It does not, however, give specific areas of study where the minister can compel an expert review, instead leaving that to regulation. Now, you would ask yourself, Speaker, what might be the challenge within that? Well, the challenge within that is that there wouldn't be any consultation on the regulation—none. So I think what we would like to see and what we've suggested, both in committee and what we've heard here today, is to legislate specific areas where the ministry can require a peer review of technical studies.

On the subject of consultation, Speaker—and I'll be brief; I know I only have 22 seconds—the bill states that the minister will consider whether adequate consultation has been carried out before making decisions regarding licences or permits, but it doesn't define what adequate consultation might be. Wouldn't you think that would be a starting point?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to again have an opportunity to speak to Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act, and to comment on the speech from the member from Scarborough–Rouge River. He spent a fair amount of time talking about red tape, and certainly we've heard from businesses around the province that over the last 15 years, red tape, excess regulation that is unnecessary, has greatly increased in the province of Ontario.

He made one statement that I completely agree with. He said that a business should be allowed to meet the goal of a regulation in a manner of their own choosing. I think that is a very wise way that the government could use that across all ministries: Instead of having such prescriptive regulations as we currently have, just set a goal and let industry figure out how they're going to get there.

He talked about the new Goldcorp mine in Chapleau that's going all electric, and it's a good example, because an all-electric mine is not going to have the fumes that a typical mine using diesel equipment would. But the regulations in the province of Ontario currently specify that if you have a mine, you have to manage with ductwork etc., and your air movement has certain volumes of air. It's very specific on how much air you have to move.

Well, in this new all-electric mine, they won't need to move those volumes of air to achieve the goal of a certain specific air quality. Really, they're going to be unnecessarily setting up the infrastructure to move the air, and they're going to be spending extra money on electricity that they don't need. Whereas if they just had a regulation that said, "You must have this air quality," and stated it specifically in parts per million or a scientific

way of describing air quality and let the company figure out that yes, they have to meet that target, they'll figure out how to do it. They wouldn't have to have all this ductwork that is just going to be an extra expense and costing a lot of extra money—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

I return to the member from Scarborough-Rouge River to wrap up.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: First of all, I'd like to thank all the honourable members: the MPPs from Niagara West-Glanbrook, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, my next-door neighbour in Whitby-Oshawa, and the last MPP who made a good comment was the MPP from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

The general theme, when I listened to all these comments and concerns, is that we have too many regulations still remaining in the bill. But the most important thing is that we talk about infrastructure and building Ontario, but in this budget, 2017, there is no money allocated for the development of the Ring of Fire. Without that, we're losing already \$2 billion because there's no mention in the budget, and all of our MPPs did mention that.

I hope that when the bill comes back—Bill 39 has to be corrected and cover all these concerns. So hopefully, in 2018, next year, we will get the money to develop the Ring of Fire and then create lots and lots of stuff: 5,500 jobs and \$2 billion in revenue for Ontario. Even smaller owners could have more ready access. And then I'm sure that, with a good bill—we need this, but we need a better Bill 39.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act.

It's estimated that, on average, every one of us here uses somewhere up to 15 tonnes of aggregate per year. That's the equivalent of one full truckload. Clearly, we are all heavily dependent on it. We all use it, we all need it, and we all benefit from it.

As an example, my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is home to 117,000 residents who utilize 148 bridges and culverts and 650 kilometres of roads in Bruce county alone, and 189 bridges and culverts and 877 kilometres of roads in Grey county. So we have huge infrastructure needs in Bruce and Grey counties alone. We're going to need the aggregates to be able to provide the replenishment and the refurbishment of those types of facilities. We also produce a lot of it—almost six million metric tonnes. And we employ hundreds of people directly in aggregate production and the spinoff industries, as well as indirect jobs. In addition, aggregate-producing operations such as concrete and asphalt plants account for a further 800 jobs between Grey and Bruce counties—a huge impact on our community. Based on this, we estimate that another 1,600 jobs are dependent on the region's aggregate industry.

I mentioned earlier that a couple of years ago, just here in the city of Toronto, we were told that there were

228 construction cranes—the busiest city in North America for construction, most of that requiring aggregate from across ridings like mine, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

With billions of dollars in infrastructure plans, it means we're facing an even higher need for aggregates over the next decade across the province. A lot of our facilities, a lot of our infrastructure needs replacement. We're going to need those aggregates. So it's timely that the review is done, but we need to do it right. We have to have a reliable and well-sourced aggregate supply system.

Our job with Bill 39 is to make sure that it has the right policy directive, legislation and regulations that will allow for the resources to be extracted, processed and used in a timely manner. And the process has to be transparent.

We know this bill has been seven years in the making. It started with the State of the Aggregate Resource review back in 2010. Between the review and subsequent hearings held in 2012, which the public and opposition members contributed to, there were many recommendations put forward. Sadly, the government ignored a majority of them in the end, which is unfortunate because, as I said earlier in my remarks, this is an industry that will have an impact on every single person in Ontario.

I also want, at this point, to commend my colleague and Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones for championing the increased use of recycled aggregates. Back in 2014, she introduced Bill 56 to guarantee that we recycle more and extract less by allowing contractors to use recycled aggregates when bidding on construction projects paid for with public money. More importantly, her bill also aimed to divert at least three million tonnes of recycled aggregates from stockpiles to construction and refurbishment projects.

As I said earlier, I can't understand, when you have something that's there as a resource, why the government would not support the necessity of actually utilizing that first. They talk a lot about recycling in many other areas of industry and the environment, and the impacts, and yet in this case they're not prepared to move forward with that.

I want to just add that Ms. Jones's bill had very widespread support. I'm going to name some of the organizations that offered support to her: the Ontario Road Builders Association, Aggregate Recycling Ontario, the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, the Ready Mixed Concrete Association of Ontario, the Ontario Hot Mix Producers Association, the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association, and many others.

During second reading debate, our then Ministry of Natural Resources critic and member from Prince Edward-Hastings, and my seatmate, although he's not right here now, Todd Smith—we have the great member from Whitby-Oshawa sitting as my seatmate now—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: I didn't say that publicly, did I?

He spoke about the fact that Bill 39 is heavy on regulations. This is of special concern when it involves agricultural land, as it can bring about unintended consequences.

I think earlier today the member from Barrie spoke about unintended consequences in regard to the bill introduced by my colleague Percy Hatfield from Windsor-Tecumseh. And yet, Madam Speaker, I reminded her that the unintended consequences of closing up to 600 schools are going to have a significant impact on our communities across this great province. So we want her to actually think about what she said today and go back and think about how she will vote on those unintended consequences if she continues to move forward with her education minister and her Premier to close 600 schools across our great province.

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As our party has always said, the government should be careful and not overburden farmers, who are real business people. As I've always said in this House, farming is a real business, and I stand proudly for them, particularly for those across Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, but across the whole province. Ontario has about 80,000 farmers who generate 160,000 jobs by farming a total of 3.6 million hectares of cropland with 125 different types of crops and livestock. Farming is a \$14-billion business, and it truly is the backbone of our province. Agriculture has a proud tradition. It has always been there, it always will be there, and it needs government to show support and pride in that industry so that they are always there. After all, Madam Speaker, the food comes from the land that those farmers are truly proud of and are great stewards of.

This Liberal government sadly has a record of making it hard for farmers to operate and stay in business. Just in this most recent budget, a week ago today, they cut \$47 million. And yet the agriculture minister almost daily stands up in here and says how big of a champion, how big of a proponent he is. Well, either he doesn't have the clout at the table of cabinet or he's really not sharing with us his true sense of what that industry has, or we wouldn't have seen a decrease of \$47 million to something as fundamental as the healthy provision of food for all the people across our great province.

Madam Speaker, in my backyard, in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, we have local aggregate companies such as Owen Sound Ledgerock, Shouldice Designer Stone, Bruce Peninsula Stone, Wiarton Stone Quarry, Limberlost Stone, and a number of other smaller family-run operations, which help to produce between 160 million and 180 million tonnes of aggregate in Ontario each year. They also bring to me on a regular basis that they have to contend with regulatory burdens, so the last thing we want to see when we're reviewing legislation such as this act is to add more regulatory burdens, more administration, more bureaucracy and more things that take them away from actually doing the job. Shuffling more paper is a costly thing, as opposed to actually being able to extract that great product, get it to market and get it used,

which, again, is an upward cycle of creating employment, jobs, taxation and the economic vitality of our great province.

I want to speak about a very specific individual, Ted Hayes, and his family. He and Phyllis started a business many, many years ago called EPH, which is actually in the automotive sector, but as a result of their great success and their prowess as business people, they've also branched out into other things. They've built retirement homes. They've built land to house the LCBO in Lion's Head—a great part of our area—and they actually moved on to a quarry. But it's taken 10 years to get a quarry permit, Madam Speaker.

In an area like the Bruce Peninsula, where there's not a great deal of employment, he said, "I want the kids of my family to be able to stay here. I want the workers' kids, if they so choose, to be able to stay here." He invested. He took that brave, bold step of saying, "I'm going to go through the process," and all he really wanted was a transparent, black-and-white process that said, "Here's exactly what you have to do," and he stepped up to the plate. It was one of my first files.

I also had one through Harold Sutherland's quarry, Harold Sutherland Construction. It took him over 10 years, virtually a very similar thing. He came to my office very frustrated; he had invested hundreds of thousands of dollars, and at every turn there was another new obstacle put in his way. He had to come through with a new study, a new request, which cost more and more, and again prevented people from actually getting into the workforce. It prevented people, particularly in an area like mine that has a lot of transient, seasonal workers, from actually being able to do that.

I go back to Ted. He struggled because the goal posts kept changing. But Ted is a very successful, very bright and very committed person, particularly to our community. His and Phyllis's commitment is absolutely outstanding, and what they do for our community. He's prepared to do what he has to, but there is a financial reality to all of this.

I give credit to the current minister, Minister McGarry, and actually the former minister, Minister Mauro. Both have been very good to work with. They are people who actually accept your questions and challenges, and get back to you in a timely manner. But it still is a challenge. We kept pushing. We were persistent. We kept bringing it back, and they worked with us to find a resolution to actually providing an approved permit for the Hayes quarry. It was burdensome: one stumbling block after another—and hundreds of jobs, as I've said.

Finally, we were able to get that licence, Madam Speaker, but it is now held up in the courts, and he is not able to truly go. Despite having an actual permit, signed by the minister, in his hand, he still is being held up.

That's the challenge I talked about earlier in regard to the regulatory burden that's impacting our ability to get those resources for our much-needed building and infrastructure industry. It's a strong reminder of why the process must be made transparent and build a relation-

ship between proponents and their communities. For this reason, I was pleased to hear that the ministry has agreed to clarify precise cases under which it could request a peer-reviewed study—especially those involving water tables.

Importantly, I know the member for Prince Edward—Hastings spent some time at second reading talking about the need for government to work out a legislative definition as to what constituted adequate consultation with our province's indigenous people.

Again, I have physically lived through two of these experiences. I've brought, or tried to bring, all of the parties to the table and said that the expectation for all around the table, for the betterment of all of us, is a set of rules that everybody understands, that are clear, and that are not ambiguous and continually apt to change. It's good for the First Nations community, because they know for sure that they're getting their proper consultation. It's good for the proponent.

Madam Speaker, think of yourself if you were to invest a million dollars in something that you truly believed in, for the benefit of the people in your riding, and you had a business person coming to you and saying, "I'm prepared to invest; I'm prepared to stake a claim for me and my community, to make it better in the future," for the kids, the pages that sit in front of you. And then every time you thought you were at the finish line and going to get a permit, someone could actually change the rules and change the requirements of consultation.

I don't think that's fair to anyone. I don't think that serves anyone. It certainly doesn't serve our province, because those resources are now not able to be extracted and brought to wherever they're needed, in urban areas like Toronto or Ottawa or Hamilton. They're certainly not providing employment in places like Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, where it's absolutely critical that that happens.

The proponents came to me. I brought in the Ministry of Natural Resources. I tried to bring in the First Nations. I brought in the environment ministry. I brought in any of the stakeholders, which to me made sense—the conservation authorities—anyone who was going to have a say in this permitting process. Let's come in and let's actually take a look at this process, and let's put in clarity. Let's make sure that everyone in the room can agree to the terms and conditions, and we can move on.

We actually wanted to get it there so that it was clear and fair for all, and consistent. That's the other thing, Madam Speaker. It shouldn't be different because a minister comes in and says, "I think it should be this way," and a new minister comes in a few months later and says, "No, no, no. I don't agree. I'm going to change it." For all of us, we want clarity. We want consistency. We want rules that are designed with all stakeholders' input. No one is trying to usurp our First Nations' reality of having proper consultation, but we have to get everyone around the table and make a clear definition.

It's like trying to run a democracy here, Madam Speaker. You could change the rules every time Mr.

Walker, one of your favourites, stands up and has a chat with you—not that I think you would ever do that, Madam Speaker, but you understand what I am saying. We want to ensure that there's one set of rules that are consistent, that are black and white, and everybody knows the game they're playing.

I want to see, I wanted then to see, and I still want to see the minister make that decision-making process a level playing field for all parties by inserting deadlines into aboriginal consultation standards.

Again, no one is saying we don't want to consult or we won't consult. They're prepared. They're spending a lot of money, in fact, to have all of the terms and conditions. No one has once said, in my experience, "I don't want to." They may wish not to want to, but they've always said, "We will do it. We just need to understand what the game is that we're playing. We need to understand."

I had a situation as well on dredging. It was similar to quarries, but it was dredging. I actually met with the First Nations and said, "Why can't you bring your consultant to the table? Put in what your requirements are, and at least let's have a 10-year timeline." You've chosen the consultant. You've chosen the realities. Everyone else can have their say in that consultation period, but you sign off for a period of at least 10 years, so that the proponent coming in, whether it's for dredging of a dock or whether it's a quarry, has certainty and clarity. There's nothing the investment community dislikes more than changing yardsticks, changing goalposts, such that the game moves, and that original \$1-million investment becomes a \$2-million investment.

In the case of Mr. Hayes, who I mentioned earlier, he actually has a permit approved. He had signed contracts with other companies to rent equipment, to buy equipment. He had started down the process of hiring people. Then they come in and say, "Oh, but you can't extract yet. We still have a few more provisions."

How do you get a permit approved, with a signature on it, if that then can change after? If you buy a new car, Madam Speaker, I don't think your dealership should be able to come along to you six days later and say, "Oh, but you can't really have the car. We're going to have a few more conditions on it." If you signed off and it's all there and you've got the permit—in this case, the receipt and the invoice that you've paid—you can't change the deal on this.

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I think it's very concerning. It still is a big, big issue in my community and across Ontario—wherever. I always come back to the principle of fairness. I think it serves all parties if we can come into a room, if we can actually put all of our concerns and challenges on the table and have a very forthright, honest discussion, whatever the rules and terms are, and we come out of there—again, it's like democracy. Everybody gets to have their say, they get to have their vote, and as long as all the parties have been properly there—and we define what "consultation" should be.

I don't understand how anybody can argue that that's not a fair process for all parties, having clarity in any rules. I play a lot of sports. I want to understand the rules when I play hockey or baseball or broomball or badminton, whatever it is. I want to understand the rules of the game. Everybody is going to try to game those rules, Madam Speaker; I get that. But the referee—the Speaker, in this case—knows the rules, and they do not allow those to be bent, or there are penalties. There are admonitions occasionally for some people in this House, and that's okay, because we understand the game. I'm okay with being removed from the Legislature if I go beyond that line, as long as the goalposts don't change.

We seek annual reporting, something supported by the industry as well as environmental stakeholders. That's another area of contention that we've heard through some of the consultations. It currently is an annual reporting. We don't want to drive up more administration and bureaucracy. We don't want these people who have invested all this money to spend more time shuffling more paper. We need to find a way to get people to the workplace, to make sure people have good-paying jobs, good, stable jobs. These proponents are trying to do that.

We sought clarity on the royalty as well as a guarantee that any additional levies would go to the local municipalities where pits and quarries are located. I shared at the very first part of my delivery today that a lot of aggregates are extracted from my area. That puts a lot of stress on our local roads, our bridges—all of the infrastructure we have. It's only right that those municipalities are stepping to the table, saying, "If this is going to go forward, we need to be one of those stakeholders. We need to be compensated fairly so that the impact to our local regions is not going to be punitive."

I shared with you: 228 construction cranes two years ago in the city of Toronto. It probably is a little lower than that now, but it's still a lot of cranes when you drive around—most of that being fed by aggregates from areas like the great riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. We're happy to do that. That's a good thing for our area, it's a good thing for the city of Toronto and it's a good thing for all Ontarians, but there is a cost to deliver those goods here. We need to ensure that those levies are going to be shared appropriately and proportionately.

It's kind of like the gas tax that my colleague from Pembroke—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. You admonish him fairly regularly; you would have gotten the name right, I'm sure, Madam Speaker.

He talks about the gas tax. Who spends more money on gas than people in rural and northern Ontario? Yet, unless you have a public transit system—I only have one that truly is a public transit system in my whole area. But I can share with you that I am one of those people: 75,000 kilometres a year I put on my car serving my constituents. And that's with it sitting here from Sunday to Thursday. That's a lot of gas through the door; that's a

lot of money out, and yet we get nothing as taxpayers for the gas tax. The federal government understands. They actually apportion gas tax to every municipality equally and fairly.

I'm getting a little off-topic. I'll come back to the bill, Madam Speaker.

Grey county has been lobbying for years for an increase to the portion of annual aggregate fees received by municipalities. They were told by the minister's predecessor in 2016 that the government was ready to adopt the recommendation from the producers and municipalities, which was to bring in a universal and higher levy. As of today, we're nowhere closer to knowing what the government would like the levy to be or whether or not the royalty will even be increased. Again, clarity, consistency: People need to understand the game they're playing.

Modernizing the Mining Act should be done in the spirit of increasing investment in Ontario's prospecting and mining sectors, not making them more complicated by adding uncertainty and red tape.

I'm going to finish, for the most part, with regard to the Ring of Fire. We want to see something physical happen with the Ring of Fire. Enough announcements and enough times coming out and saying, "We're doing it. We're there." It's a billion-dollar investment that's going to have billions of dollars of positive ripple effects—if they ever put a shovel in the ground. Yet it was not even mentioned in the 2017 budget.

A final shout-out to the aggregates industry: There are a lot of quarries and pits out there that have been recycled. They've actually taken that natural resource, which has been used to build our roads, our bridges, our skyscrapers, and our homes in our own communities—and that's a wonderful thing—and those companies have done a great job of going back and recycling and turning those pits and quarries into usable, viable recreational lands, and they're actually good for the environment. So I want to have a shout-out to them.

This is a piece of legislation that needed a review. I'm just going to summarize everything by saying that what we want is a fair and level playing field. We want consistency. We want to get rid of ambiguity. We definitely don't want to ever put discretion into one single minister's hands. You need to understand the rules of the game you're playing. They need to be rock-solid—pardon the pun—for all players involved. You need to have consultation at all levels, and ensure that when this piece of legislation is finally revised, it's serving the people of Ontario, all people, fairly and in a consistent manner and on a level playing field.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing that it's almost 6 p.m., I will be adjourning the House until Monday, May 8, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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